A brief Narration of some of the Principle Events in the Life of Joel W. Jones with a few Observations

transcribed by Leigh V. Stephens (December 2011)

Washington Arsenal
District of Columbia
1849

The following brief narrative is committed to paper under the supposition that at some future day (when nature shall have consigned me to that rest which all animated creation must sooner or later submit to) it may be a source of satisfaction and gratification to at least some one or more of my descendants [sic] to have the means of truthfully knowing the origen [sic] and life’s trials of their progenitor.

It is true, I have an object in view in these revelations, an object which I trust may be of some essential service to those most directly interested, and it is this, should fortune specially favor any of my descendants [sic] and they during their brief earthly career, in consequence there of, foolishly become proud upstarts and fops, affecting to despise those of their fellow beings less favored than themselves, that they shall here be reminded of their folly, and that all earthly blessings at best are ephemeral in duration. And again, on the other hand, should others be left as I was in early youth without a home, in ignorance and destitution, that they may also have a knowledge of my endurance and laborious struggles to guide and cheer them on in the hope of better days. But these lines are not so much intended for the latter days as the first. And why? Because it is no uncommon occurrence [sic] for children who have been well educated and made independent by the industry, economy and enterprise of parents to deny and attempt to keep out of view the fact that their parents commenced life under most adverse circumstances and only accumulated the means by which their children were respectfully raised, educated and placed in good social positions, through long years of trial, deprivation and anxiety. Gratitude, the most consoling of all obligations to a parent, is most unaccountably too often forgot. Not unfrequently [sic], children desire the final exit of their parents that they may the sooner come into the full and uncontrolled possession of the accumulations of long years of labor, prudence and intelligent industry. I beg and pray that this may never be my fate. My greatest ambition is to deserve the love and esteem of my children.

These few preliminary remarks are made simply to show the objects which actuate me in committing to paper this imperfectly composed and written narrative. If it shall have the effect to guide, or benefit, in the remotest degree, a single of my descendants directing them into the paths of industry, economy and moral rectitude, I shall be content. I shall make no attempt at fine writing. I [do] not desire that any thing I here write to go beyond the circle of those few who should have a direct personal interest in my name. My qualifications are too limited to write anything for publication. I shall
therefore only write in the plainest and simplest language at my command a truthful narrative of the principal events of my life, and after my marriage, including those of my wife, down to the present writing, 1849. And as I have never kept a diary I shall be compelled to depend on memory alone from which to make up my record. I doubt not, however, but that I shall be able to remember all that will be worthy of noting down.

I have been told that I was born in the City of Troy, state of New York, on the 1st day of October 1806, that my Grandfather on my fathers side, Joel Jones, was of Welch descent and my Grandmother on the same side of Irish, the both of them were natives of the U.S. and raised near the Hudson river. They were farmers and lived many years (probably 50) in the town of Duanesburgh and where they both died in the years 1822 & 1823, having raised twelve children, six boys and six girls. They were all raised as farmers. The names of the boys were Samuel, John, Enos (my father) Peter, James, and Smith. The names of the girls were Deborah married-Duncan, Mariam, married Daniel Scribner- Sarah, married Liah [?] Baker – Anna, married Benona Thompson – Patty, married Lyman Lum & Phebe, married – Goodspeed. They were all living except my father Enos when I was a boy 12 years old. Most of them have scattered over the west, and I know but little of their families. My father (Enos) was the third son and died before my remembrance [sic]. He left Duanesburgh in the year 1807 to go (to what was then called the far west) to the western part of the state of N.Y. and has never been heard of since either directly or indirectly. He is supposed to have died suddenly among strangers or to have been murdered in the neighborhood of Auburn.

My grandfather on my mothers side Christopher Webber, lived and died in the town of Mansfield, CT. Of him I know little.

My grandmother on the same side was a Hanks, the branch of an English family who were early settlers in Connecticut. She married a second husband named Calvin Preston & resided in Batetown half way between Troy and Lansingburgh from about 1804 to 1816 when she died. She was my protector until I was ten years old and I called her mother. She raised five children, two boys, John and Urial Webber, and three girls. My mother Sarah, the other two I never knew.

My father and mother were married in 1804 and had three children. Christopher, myself and John F. The eldest Christopher was raised by grandfather Jones, I was taken by my grandmother Webber (then Preston) and John F. was raised by his Uncle Urial Webber in Connecticut. By the death of my father my mother was left in destitute circumstances with three infants to take care of and no means. John F. was not born until some months after my father left home, and the oldest then not three years old. After struggling [sic] and suffering a few months she was compelled to to [sic] break up the family and distribute the three children among such of her relatives as would take them. My mother was a poor afflicted woman hardly capable of taking care of herself, much less a family of three infant children. She was quite deaf, and so much afflicted with lethargy that she would fall asleep at her meals and in the most public place, rendering her unfit and unsafe to have the care of three small children. She went to Connecticut to her brother Urial Webber during the infancy of John F. and remained with him until
1812, when she abandoned all her own relations in Connecticut and took up her residence in Duanesburgh in the neighborhood of grandfather Jones, leaving John F. to be raised by his uncle. She supported herself many years by weaving. She still resides in the same town but is now a very old decrepit woman depending mostly on me for her support. Her suffering both mental and physical are very great.

My brother Christopher was brought up as a farmer by my grandfather Jones where he had a good home and was tenderly cared for. The old gentleman and his wife both died about the time that Christopher arrived at years of manhood. Grandfather Jones during a long life maintained the character of a kind, hospitable, and generous hearted man, as did also his wife. My brother Christopher was married in 1828 and has now a large family, mostly girls. He resides in Chenango Co. – in the state of N.Y. and has ever been an honest hard working man. I have not seen him in over 20 years and have never seen any of his family, except his wife soon after their marriages. I expect before long to make him a visit.

John F. my younger brother learned the trade of a wheel right and Coach-maker with his Uncle Uriah Webber. I have never seen him but twice since my remembrance and that was in the summer of 1830, the year he was twenty one. That year, he visited me a few days in New London, Conn. and I returned the visit. He was well and tenderly raised by his Uncle and when I saw him was a fine looking promising young man. In the fall of that year (1830) he went to the state of Ohio to seek a fortune in a new home in the new west. A year or so after he married and in 1836 he removed into the state of Missouri and settled (or rather I should say became a squatter on the public lands) in Linn Co. where he has resided to the present time. I learn from his letters that he has a good farm, has prospered, has several children and lives happily. Of course I know nothing personally of his family or circumstances, tho [sic] I have reason to believe that he has done as well as most of those who have left the old states of East and settled on the wild lands of the West.

I have thus related very briefly a partial history of my nearest relatives so far as I have been enabled to gather information. My personal knowledge of them has, from the peculiar circumstances of my roving life, been very limited. I have seen but little of any of my relatives since my fifteenth year. These brief notes may not in all particulars be exact. I believe, however, that I can state with truth that the most of my relatives on both my fathers and mothers side are an honest hard working people. The second generation, cousins, are numerous, but I know little of them, with the exceptions of some half dozen.

One of my Uncles, James Jones, will not be very favorably spoken of when relating that portion of my history during my residence in his family. Should I feel compelled (as I undoubtedly shall) to relate some of his conduct towards me when I was a helpless boy that will not be flattering to his humanity. I trust that his descendents, should any of them chance to read these notes, they will not suppose it gave me any pleasure to record them. On the other hand, it is with pain that I ever recur to the subject. But I am now resolved as near as I can to relate facts in this narrative where I am immediately concerned and where too my own folly or indiscretion has been the most
prominent. And I do thus make this record that those most interested in my reputation may have before them my experience to guide them into the paths of discretion & rectitude and thus enabled (if they deeming experience of any value) to shun the shoals and quicksands that so often came near being my destruction. [sic]

I shall take up the thread of my own eventful life from the earliest period of my recollection, as also of a prior date, so far as I have been told and supposed facts have come to my knowledge, and shall continue it down to 1849, the time of the present writing, adding there after such further memoranda as time and circumstances may suggest or as I may deem worthy of note in the downward course of my earthly pilgrimage.

As stated in the beginning of this narrative I was born in the city of Troy, state of N.Y. on the 1st October 1806 and was taken by my grandmother Webber, Calvin Preston being her second husband when I was an infant and before my remembrance. I can first recollect living with her in a small village called at that time Batetown midway between Troy and Lansingburgh, and there going to school. This must have been about the year 1810. Troy and Albany at that period was the centre from which communication with our northern and western frontiers started out and from which troops and munitions were forwarded during our War with England in the years 1812, 13, and 14. Many of the scenes of those years are fresh in my memory, but of them I shall not speak here. I was too young to form opinions or judge intelligibly of any thing I saw or heard.

I lived with her (my grandmother) until 1816 when I was ten years old, during all which time I was tenderly taken care of and kept at school from the time I could lisp a word. In that year (1816) she died and I was soon after turned adrift by her husband Preston, a poor helpless boy only ten years old, without home, and I may almost say without a relative or friend who cared what became of me so long as I did not become a tax upon them. However, at that early period of my life I could not reason and consequently did not realize the helplessness of my situation. As from this period any further reference to my kind and motherly grandmother Webber will be unnecessary, and as my early love for her has never abated, it is perhaps proper that I should here remark that while I resided with her I called her mother and knew not that I had any other. Her husband, Calvin Preston, I called father. Among the boys I was called Joel Preston, and I was quite a large boy eight or nine years old before I was told I had any other name. And until after my grandmother’s death I never knew that she was living with a second husband. While my grandmother lived I was treated with the greatest tenderness, perhaps too much so, and gratified in all my desires, but very soon after her death and when I had no one but Preston to look to every thing became changed. Preston had occasional fits of drinking before my grandmother before [sic] her death, and soon after became so intemperate as to neglect his business in a shop of his own near his residence. This was soon closed. He went away I knew not where and I left to run in the streets without restraint and pick up my food among the neighbors. I was neither regularly fed or kept clean. After a while Preston came back and began to use harsh language to me and threaten to whip me. This greatly alarmed me and I frequently ran away from him. In a short time he told me I must leave him and seek a home among my relatives in
Duanesburgh of whom I knew nothing. This greatly distressed me as I still looked upon Preston as my father and so continued to call him. My relatives I had never seen, with Preston I had always lived and I did not desire to quit him. While my grandmother lived he was always kind to me and I do not desire I make him appear any worse than he really was. When sober he was naturally a kind man and I have no doubt it was from his intemperance alone that caused him to change so towards me, and having no family there to restrain or hold him in check, he desired to get rid of me as his only encumbrance.

I well remember that it was in the month of January, some months after my grandmother’s death (dates I cannot remember) that I was ordered to pack up my clothing in a bundle and start for my relatives in Duanesburgh and seek a home among them as best I could. My task was soon accomplished. Duanesburgh was some thirty miles distant. It seemed far off. I had never been further than Albany since my recollection. It was in the dead of winter. The snow was deep and the weather piercing cold. My clothing was scanty. I had no overcoat and had never been exposed to any hardship. I was furnished with some cold victuals and twenty five cents in money to pay for my lodging one night while on the journey. I did no get started till near the middle of the day as I delayed some time in bidding my schoolmates goodbye. Charles and John Morey were my paricular associates. These I left with regret. My bundle of clothing, victual and skates made me quite a load for so small a boy and I did not reach Albany until near night. I cannot think had Preston been sober the day he started me off to inquire my way through to me an unknown country to seek my relations of whom I knew nothing but that he would have relented or at least waited until spring and until he had communicated with my grandfather Jones and prevailed with him to send for me. When I arrived in Albany I found a lodging place at a farmers tavern in the outskirts of the city where I got a bed for 12 ½ cents, eating my supper and breakfast from the victuals I carried with me. During the evening while inquiring about my route I found a farmer who said he was the next morning going through Duanesburgh and that he would take me along for 50 cents. I told him I had not the money but that I would give him my skates, which he accepted and I gave them to him that night. And I here remark that they were the last skates I ever owned.

The next morning early we started up the great western (Cherry Valley) turnpike facing a cold north west wind. I regret that I have forgotten the name of the man as he treated me kindly, wrapped me up in his blankets and gave me victuals on the road. About sundown that night he set me down near Duane’s church and directed me now to inquire my way. My hopes had been to reach my grandfathers house that night, but on inquiring I found that he resided four miles from the turnpike on a back road then blocked up with deep snow. In this dilemma I made for the first farm house I could see and begged for shelter for the night, telling the people who I was and where I was going. This was not only cheerfully granted, but I was furnished with a good warm supper and breakfast and started off the next day on the right road. From these people, who were very talkative, I learned a good deal about my relations many of whom I had never before heard of. After wading through the snow on an unbroken road until about noon I reached my grandfathers house and made myself known. I may well be supposed that all were surprised at my arrival. And now for the first time since my remembrance I met my
brother Christopher, my grand parents, several uncles and aunts. I was kindly received. All seemed glad to see me. I was fondled with and this made me happy. The future I never thought of. Indeed I supposed I had found a home more than equal to the one I had been driven away from. This happy state went on until the opening of spring. I was then told that my grandfather did not want me, that he was getting old, but that my Uncle James Jones did, that he would do well by me if I would go and stay with him until I was twenty one. Inducements were held out that I should be well clothed, go to school in winter, and when I was 21 years old, I should receive a fine new suit of clothes and a yoke of Oxen. These were the terms proposed by my grandfather and promised by my Uncle to fulfill.[sic] I demurred [sic] a little at first as I was satisfied where I was. I greatly loved all my grandparents family, they were so kind. However, I was over persuaded, and consented to go and my Uncle came for me in his sleigh sometime in March and took me to his home. He lived at that time about four miles distant from my grandfather and adjoining the Duane’s fly farm. Up to this time I had been all my life petted and treated tenderly, except for a few months after my grandmothers death, and even then Preston had generally been kind to me. But now commences my new life with hardships, labors and deprivations that few boys of my tender age ever passed through and which I more sensibly felt from the fact of having ever known want or been compelled to work.

From this date I was doomed, as the sequel wills how, to labor hard early and late, and not alone to hard labor, but also, to all kinds of exposure by day, insufficient food and scanty covering at night. My Uncle James and his wife were very penurious and tyrannical, especially his wife, and the treatment I received from them during the four years I lived with them was of the most unfeeling character as I shall presently show. My Uncle’s farm at this time was mostly newly cleared, stumpy and stoney, [sic] and hard to work. His stock consisted of about twenty horses and cattle and perhaps 40 or 50 sheep and hogs. He was a new beginner in farming for himself. At a small barn near his dwelling he kept in winter his horse and milk cows, and at a large barn over half a mile distant he kept his other cattle and sheep. His dwelling was a small frame house with but two rooms and an unfinished garret. Is family consisted of himself, wife, and two small children. In the garret was made my bed, or rather nest, it being only an armful of course straw spread on the floor between the chimney and an old chest- my covering only a few old clothes the refuse about the house-no sheets or blankets. The consequence of being thus lodged and cold and never undressing I soon contracted disease and I found it impossible to retain my water an hour at a time. For three winters I thus slept in an open garret, there never being a night I did not wet myself. The snow would blow in. My sleeping nest was as filthy as the nest of my Uncle’s hogs. When I got up in the morning steaming with urine, I was sent to feed the animals at the large barn and many times my clothes had frozen on me in a few minutes after leaving my nest. I was besides thinly clad. No drawers, no undershirt, no overcoat. My clothing consisted simply of a tow shirt, country home made jacket, pants, stockings & shoes. I used to think sometimes that I should certainly perish with cold while wading through snow waist deep to the large barn. It required on cold days my utmost physical exertion to keep from freezing. I was too afraid of my uncle and aunt that I never dared to complain, tho [sic] I used to cry and moan in solitude almost daily. From the day I first went to live with my uncle until I finally quit him, from some cause, I can hardly tell what, I was always in great fear of
both him and his wife, so much so, that during all the times I lived in his family I never dared to utter a murmur [sic] of dissatisfaction, disobey an order, or make known my sufferings to friends or neighbors. His orders tome were always given in the most pre-entory [sic] manner which made me tremble at the sound of his voice. His wife also exercised her authority in a similar manner. I was usually called up mornings about day-light by my uncle or aunt calling out to me from below and I always jumped [sic] up at the first call. Young, weak and inexperienced as I was I was put to all kinds of work done upon a farm. In the spring I was put to plowing and all other kinds of labor. I labored more hours than my uncle himself. Everything was strange to me. Still I was made to perform the labor of a strong man and unless I did so I was scolded and sometimes whipped. The farm was a very hard one to work. The soil being cold and stiff, and most of the fields full of stumps and stones, and many times I was so worked down, particularly during the first years of my servitude, that when I got up in the morning my back and limbs were stiff and so pained me that I would have given worlds had I possessed there to have been permitted to return to my old foster father friend Preston, who I still looked upon as my only father, notwithstanding, I knew he had turned me away. I was allowed occasionally on Sunday to visit my brother at grandfather Jones and was always kindly treated, besides, getting a belly full of good wholesome food. These visits, tho [sic] not permitted very frequently, were looked for with unalloyed pleasure, but in no one of these visits I never had the courage to make known the manner in which I was treated, for fear hey would be stopped. I have never since those days doubted but that had I complained to my grandfather and made him aware of how I was worked, fed, and lodged, I should been taken from my Uncle James and placed with some other family, as the old man was kind towards all. Another reason I had for not making complaints was, that my thoughts were centered upon running away upon the first good opportunity and I did not desire to be suspicioned [sic] of such a design.

The first year I learned to milk and do most kinds of work on the farm and was made to do all kinds of work about the house- washing, cooking, churning. Whenever any of our relatives visited at my uncles, he and his wife were uncommon kind to me, tho [sic] I was generally sent away from the house on some duty and rarely set at the table with company. My evenings were usually employed in the house, taking care of the children, mending clothes, sweeping, washing dishes. I was never permitted to be away an evening, consequently, I formed no acquaintances among the boys in the neighborhood. For some months at one time, while my aunt was sick, I was compelled to wash her infants diapers evenings and do all the other dirty work of the house. This was a most bitter pill, yet to all outward appearance I done it cheerfully. It is true I did not reason much at this time, still, I had a sort of an instinct [sic] sense which taught me that I was imposed upon and when alone, I frequently made up my mind to resent it, but I never had the courage to act.

In the spring of 1817, my uncle removed to another farm, a larger and better one, on which he lived the ensuing two years. I believe it was a rented farm, tho [sic] I am not positive. My uncle now greatly increased his stock and I presume made money. During this whole two years my life was one continued round of hard work and hard fare. But as my uncle employed a part of the time hired help, the monotony of my life was somewhat
diversified. His hired help, however, seldom remained long in his employ, as they would not put up with the fare and early and late hours of labor and constant drive. He consequently had a bad name among his neighbors. Some of the neighbors talked about my treatment of which they learned from those he had employed at various times. It is needless to go over in detail these two years. I worried through them as best I could. It may well be supposed the time seemed long. I had become inured to labor and hardness in my feelings and did not hope for relief from any quarter until I could run-away–this was uppermost in my thoughts. I therefore worked on patiently and without an audible murmur. [sic] I had grown stout, got hardened, had an uncommon good constitution [sic], could eat anything and sleep anywhere.

In the spring of 1819 my uncle purchased a farm in the south part of the town, distant eight miles, to which he removed and commenced farming on a tolerable large scale for that section of country. My thoughts still run upon running away, but being now a little better treated than I had been during the previous three years I deferred the time. My uncle now employed extra help indoors and out, which not only relieved me from a good deal of work about the house but it gave me some docily. [sic] From the hired man I obtained a good deal of information about the outside world and acquired some little manliness of character. At most kinds of field work I now performed a man’s labor and consequently was not so often found fault with. The hired help always made great complaints about the bad living and few of them stayed over a month or two before quitting, when of course followed a quarrel–I said nothing, altho [sic] I heard all, and was frequently cognizant of a quarrel some days before it took place. I was now allowed to visit some of my relations about once a month, going on Saturday evening and returning on Sunday evening. During the winter of 1819 and 20 I began seriously to lay my plans for running away. I had no money and not a single good suit of clothes. I was indeed ragged. I knew no one out of town or hardly a road ten miles from home and I made no friend to whom I dared open my mind and feelings or to whom I felt I could safely apply for advice or information. I was very ignorant for a boy of my age, could barely write my name, and what little I had learned while living with my grandmother and Preston I had nearly forgotten, as I had not been to school a day since I had lived with my uncle or read of book of any kind. The idea of getting away absorbed all my thoughts and I determined on making a start as soon as the spring opened and an opportunity offered. While these thoughts were occupying my mind, I worked, if anything harder and more faithfully than usual, putting on the most cheerful airs, the better to disguise my intentions. I waited patiently for months in hopes of future freedom. At last about the middle of April 1820 my uncle and his family went on a visit to his wife’s parents some eight miles distant. I had learned some days previous that such was their intention and I had accordingly matured my plans so far as I was able, to make a start as soon as I could after dark on the evening of their departure. They were to leave on Saturday afternoon and would not return until morning of Monday.

The long looked for day at last came round and my uncle with his wife and children started off on their visit, leaving me and a hired girl in charge of the house and farm. My heart was in my throat all that day I was so fearful that my designs would e
mistrusted. After my uncle and family left, the next question was how I should manage to pick up my little duds and get off without the knowledge of the girl. I helped her in milking and in all the evening work - cattle, horses were all cared for. I then suggested to the girl to visit some of the neighbors promising to remain home during her absence. The moment she left the house I lost no time in putting on my best clothes (which at best was old and patched) took an extra shirt and such cold victuals as I could find, tied to the whole up in an old cotton handkerchief and started out.

When I had fairly got into road I stopped to think and for the first time in all my ignorant planning, the question came up where shall I go? Which way turn? Thus standing, bundle in hand, my resolution to run away almost failed me, but a few minutes reflection decided my course, that go where I might. I could e no worse off than I was. I at last made up my mind to return to my early friend Calvin Preston, and throw myself on his charity - Him who I had in my infancy been taught to call by the endearing name of father. He had even been kind to me while my grandmother lived and up to the time of her death I did not know but he was my father in reality. I could remember well how he used to play and fondle with me and I could not believe but that he would take me back. I had not heard from Preston since I left him nearly four years before, and did not know whether he was dead or alive. The night I left my uncle’s was dark - no moon, tho [sic] warm and pleasant. I soon made my way to the turnpike and solitary and alone during all that night I followed it towards Albany, avoiding the toll gates and most all the persons I met on the road. I reached Albany the next morning about 9 o’clock, distance 25 miles, almost tired out, but having no money I dared not enter any house to seek a place of rest. I enquired my way through Albany and at last got on the Troy road. When about half way up the road, finding the day nearly spent, that I could not reach Troy before dark and being very weary I began to look about for a place of rest. Seeing some hay stacked in a field off from the road secluded from any dwelling I made for them and which I soon reached. There I set down, eat the last of my provisions, dug a deep hole in one of the stacks, crawled in stopping up the hole behind me so I should not be discovered by any chance passer by and soon was asleep. And a sweeter sleep I never enjoyed for full twelve hours. I did not wake up until long after sun-rise the next morning. When I crawled out I felt refreshed and if I had anything to eat I should been enabled to travel on with renewed vigor. I traveled on to Waterolist opposite Troy and tried to beg a passage over the river in the ferry scow but could not succeed. After about an hour I persuaded some boys I found playing in a ship to set me over the river. In less than another hour I found my old friend Preston. He was still living in the same old house and had got another wife.

Preston appeared glad to see me. I called him father. He at once took me to his wife and she also received me kindly. I was hungry and tired and must have looked forlorn and shabby as well as dirty, for I had not been an hour in the house before Preston had me washed up, my hair combed, a clean shirt (one of his own) put on me and a clean tie round my neck. How proud I felt at this moment. I was truly happy with my kind reception, tho [sic] I soon discovered that my old friend was still a hard drinker. I told him of all my hardships and stating as best I could my reasons for returning to him. He cursed my uncle for his inhumanity and for the time appeared satisfied that I had come
back to him. He seemed (and I have no doubt he felt) interested in my happiness. He said however, that he had no employment for me, but that I might stay with him a spell and that he would try and find me work. After a few days most happily passed, and during which time I visited some of my old schoolmates and especially the Morey boys, Preston found me a job in a plaster mill at 12 ½ cents a day. I went to work, shoveling broken plaster into the hopper for grinding. It was hard dirty work. When I had labored six days, the mill stopped for want of work. I was sorry. Was paid for my six days labor 40 cents and told I could come to work again when the mill started. With 75 cents in my pocket I felt rich— it was the largest sum of money I had ever possessed. I took it to Preston, but he told me to keep it or buy some clothing. I purchased a pair of striped summer pants for 50 cents, a straw hat at 20 cents which left me five coppers to jingle. I viewed myself from head to foot with pride, tho [sic] I felt a little uneasy at not having work. I should been glad to work at ten cents a day. After about ten days had run by in an idle manner Preston told me that he could not find employment for me anywhere and recommended me to go into the country and seek employment and a home with some farmer, tho [sic] he added he would not turn me away from his house for he said he felt that I was his child and that I should always find a home with him when out of employment, but he thought it would be to my future interest and happiness to live in the country. The hint was sufficient and I at once prepared to start, where to, I did not know. I intended to return to Preston again, as I felt that he was my only protection and friend, and notwithstanding his failings I both respected and loved him. Preston loaded me with provisions and gave me several small presents so that my bundle had greatly increased in size and weight since I left my uncles. I bid him an affectionate farewell, my eyes filled with tears and my heart overflowing with gratitude. This was about the 1st May 1820. I have never seen Preston since— tho [sic] not then intended, it proved to be a final farewell. I have been told that he died not long after I left him. His end undoubtedly hastened by his habits. With all his faults he had many good qualities and naturally a kind disposition. May his ashes rest in peace.

I took the road to Schenectady and walked on very leisurely, calling at every farm house to enquire for work. I met with no encouragement. Near sunset I was overtaken on the road by a man in quaker [sic] dress driving a fine span of horses and his wagon empty. He stopped his team and invited me to get in his wagon and ride. I thanked him and got in. a conversation soon followed in the course of which my quaker [sic] friend asked me numerous questions about where I was going, my age, parents, friends. He thus soon drew from me what he wanted, although [sic] I avoided as well as I knew how most of his questions, and informed him I was seeking employment. He told me in the most frank manner that he wanted just such a boy as I was and that if I would go home with him he would give me a good home, treat me the same as one of his own family, send me to school in the winter and when I was twenty one he would give me two new suits of clothes and a good yoke of oxen. I accepted his offer at once. I was not particular about pay. It was a home I most wanted with kind people.

We arrived at his house about 10 o’clock that evening and then I learned that my quaker [sic] friends name was Jonathan and that I was in the town of Galway. His family were all up awaiting his return, a fine warm supper was soon spread before us. I was made welcome and soon satisfied all my wants. How happy I felt. I was unaccustomed to
see such friendship in family intercourse. Jonathan, the head of the family must have been near 40 years old. His wife some years younger. There were three children. The oldest probably ten years. I was told I must call him Uncle Jonathan and his wife Aunt Mary. I never knew them by any other name. I remained with Uncle Jonathan until fall and lived happily. I was at all times kindly treated, not required to labor hard, furnished with an abundance of good clean food, comfortable clothing, visited with his family through the settlement and was everywhere received and treated the same as his family.

During the summer in various conversations I had told my new friends a good deal about my relations in Duanesburgh, which being only 20 miles distant, they frequently asked if I would not like to make them a visit. I was told that I might go to Duanesburgh any time for a week. All the family talked so much to me about the pleasures of visiting ones relations (I never told to them how I had been treated and that I had run away as I should have done) and fearing they might begin to have suspicions that I had told falsehoods, I finally concluded I would go in the fall and so informed my friends which seemed to please them. Not having heard from any one in Duanesburgh since I ran away I had some curiosity to return there for a few days. I was a very foolish boy. Having now found a home and friends that pleased me, I never once thought but that I should be allowed to return. And now to satisfy my kind friends that I had relatives as I had represented and was well desirous of making them a visit.

I announced my wish to start in the first week of Dec. (1820). My clothes were accordingly put in order that I might appear well and clean, all the family wished me a pleasant visit. I was to return in a week or ten days. When the hour came for me to leave I felt many misgivings in going away from so happy a home. I felt too that I had done wrong in not frankly disclosing my true position, but as I had not I dared not back out. I felt that I must go or subject myself to suspicion and thereby forfeit their good opinion of my honesty. If I had had any money I should have stopped in the neighborhood of Scheneetady my allotted time and then returned with some sort of tale of my visit. Leaving made an early start- I got to Duanesburgh about sun down and made direct for my Uncle James house. Why I did not go to my grandfather’s I cannot now tell. I was afraid to go anywhere and was suspicious of all. I wished myself back at Uncle Jonathans in Galway. When I reached my uncle’s house it was near 8 o’clock. I stood outside the door for sometime deliberating and fearful to go in, but at last I mustered up courage and timidly walked in. my uncle and aunt were setting alone- the children were all in bed. I greeted them with a smile as well as I could, expecting, or at least hoping for a kind reception. I was however, soon undeceived. My expected greeting was anything but kindly. The moment my uncle recognized me he furiously seized me by the collar and shook me in great anger. I was greatly abused and knew not what to say. I tried to tell him what a happy home I had found, but he would not listen to a word from me. He ordered me to be seated. My mind was at once made up. I determined in my own mind that as soon as I could get out doors again to bolt and run for life. My uncle and his wife alternately threatened and questioned me for an hour or more, after which I was ordered to bed. I made an excuse to go out first, saying I would be back in a minute. I was suspicioned [sic] and closely watched. As soon as I got outside the door I ran for the woods across a plowed field the ground frozen and very rough and just as I was getting
over the last fence, out of breath, next to the woods, my uncle caught me by the collar. He had followed me from the moment I left the door and had it not been for the fences I should in all probability out run him. He dragged and beat me all the way back to the house. I cried and begged for a long time- it had no effect. At length I became desperate and for the first time in my life used threatening language in return. I fought him, raved, and said all manner of wicked things regardless of consequences. I was, however, soon overpowered by him and his wife, stripped of my clothing, my feet and hands tied, put into a bedroom and locked up. The next morning I was released, deprived of all my good clothing, furnished with a ragged shirt, pants and jacket, and bareheaded and barefooted, the ground frozen and the weather cold, I was driven to work like a brute round the house and barn and constantly watched and threatened. Oh, how I suffered during all this day both physically and mentally. My face and hands unwashed, hair uncombed, covered with blood and bruises from the previous nights beating, my feet cut in many places from the frozen ground, my limbs stiffened and benumbed with cold. I often thought I should perish and really did not much care what became of me. Still to all outward appearance I resolutely bore up against my sufferings and doggedly remained silent.

My uncle kept me in his sight all day. When night came my uncle somewhat relaxed and began to talk to me more kindly, tho (sic) with a stern determination to break my spirits. My reason told me this. He said he had spent a week in looking for me in the spring, that if I ever ran away again he would hunt me to the ends of the earth and would severely find and punish me, but if I would not promise him future obedience he would forgive me, otherwise he should continue my punishment as he had that day until I yielded. In this dilemma what could I do? Of course I promised all he exacted and I was released. Yet the good clothes I had on when I returned were kept under lock, showing that he did not put much confidence in my promises and that he was determined if I did go away again that I should be compelled to go in rags and dirty. Oh how I grived (sic) over my condition when alone. All the revengeful feelings of my nature were roused into action. I was determined to run away again, tho (sic) for the time being I was compelled to be passive and obedient. Although 28 years have passed by since these scenes took place, yet at this moment I can call them to mind and realize my feelings at that time, as though they were of yesterdays date. I would have given worlds had I possessed them to have been back with my quaker (sic) friend Jonathan in Galway. I now realized my hard lot and keenly felt my helpless condition. I had tasted of freedom and good usage during the past summer and I firmly resolved that I would not stay with my uncle one hour longer than I was compelled to, that I would take advantage of the first opportunity offering and run away again, and the next time go where he could not find me. But I found it necessary to disguise my thoughts and intentions to throw him off his guard. I went to work cheerfully, still I was closely watched for some time, and to completely stripped of all my best clothing that I did not think prudent to make any attempt to get away, besides it was dead of winter and the snow deep. In all my wretchedness I assumed a cheerful air. The winter passed away- spring opened. My uncle and aunt became unusually kind. I had so completely disguised my discontent that they began to trust me and I suppose flattered themselves that they had subdued me and that I had given up all idea of leaving them again. They undoubtedly thought they had impressed me with the notion that I could not get off without being caught and punished. Whenever any of my relations came to my
uncle’s they would lecture me about my conduct, to all which I maintained a sullen silence. I suppose they all thought me a very bad boy. No doubt they had been so informed by my uncle and aunt and even requested to talk me as they did. Things passed on in this manner until the month of May 1821 came around. My uncle and aunt again made a visit to her fathers, leaving a hired man and woman with me in charge of the farm. What orders the man and woman had I did not know. I had none. As soon as they left (this was on Saturday afternoon) fortunately for my plans, the man went off with some of his chums to a neighboring tavern. About sundown while the woman was busy milking the cows, I stole into the house, broke open several chests and drawers, hastily collected my clothing, took a small cake of maple sugar, a loaf of bread and got off unobserved and sought shelter in some bushes until it was fully dark. So fearful was I of being mistrusted and caught that I was not ten minutes engaged in my preparation. I had long before determined on my course and the better to disguise the route I intended to pursue I had frequently talked about going to sea when I became a man and the pleasures of a sailors life so that if pursued my uncle would naturally take the road to Albany, while I would be traveling a contrary route towards Canada, where I intended to go. I have since been informed that my plans turned out as I expected, that my uncle being persuaded I would make for Albany and thence down the Hudson river to New York for the purpose of going to sea, pursued me in that direction and spent a week in searching after me- of course without avail. After it was sufficiently dark I crawled out from my hiding place and run across the fields until I reached the Cherry Valley turnpike when I turned my face westward which I had been told would lead me towards Canada, but of the distance I had no idea, tho I supposed it a long way off. I was fearful, notwithstanding all my caution that I might be followed and tracked. I therefore avoided meeting any one- pushing ahead with all my might so as to get as far away as possible by daylight in the morning. I crossed the Schoharie creek bridge about Eleven o’clock, distance eight miles, where all my knowledge of the country ended. I kept on however, following what I supposed the plainest road and by day light I must have travelled over twenty miles. The fear I felt that I might be followed (although I knew my uncle could not know of my absence for at least 24 hours) was so great that I left the main road and travelled up the valley of the Mohawk river, inquiring my way the road to Utica.

About the middle of the day I was overtaken by a man driving a team of three horses with an empty wagon. I asked him to let me ride. He stopped his team and told me to throw my bundle into the wagon and get on the lead horse, which I did, not suspecting that he was making fun of me. My aim was to gain in distance and I was willing to do most anything to accomplish it. This man told me that he lived within ten miles of Utica and that he should get home by sun-down if I drove the lead horse briskly. I soon found I had a hard bargain. I rode bareback, the horse was poor and boney- a hard trotter, and long before I reached the home of the man I thought was befriending me I was badly galled and suffered greatly with pain. This man proved to be a farmer and had only taken me up for his amusement, not thinking I suppose I would be able to hold out long- he appeared to be delighted at my rough riding and joked me a good deal about my soft saddle and what a fine trotter I was riding. I made no reply to his jokes.
We arrived at his house just as the sun was going down and when I dismounted I
could hardly stand up. I had not slept any for two days and one night and having travelled
the last 24 hours uninterruptedly and being badly galded[sic] I felt as though I could not
go any further without rest. I expected or rather hoped, that I should be invited to stop
that night with the man who had laughed so much at my rough riding, but to my great
disappointment the moment he had stopped at his own house and I had dismounted he
handed me my bundle, told me to run on and that a mill ahead I would find a tavern
where I could procure lodging. I had eat nothing during the past 24 hours but a little
bread and maple sugar. I was faint and trembling. All however did not shake my
resolution. I was determined to push on and to ask no favor of this man if I perished on
the road side. I travelled on slowly until some time after dark when I came to a
comfortable looking farm house into which I ventured and asked for lodging. At my first
entrance I thought the people mistrusted me, and it would be no wonder if they did, for I
must have looked miserable and dirty. And here I will remark that the better to cover my
retreat from my uncle I had determined from the first to change my name so he could not
trace me. This night was the first time I had occasion to use a name at all and when asked
what it was, where I was from and where I was going, I readily answerd that my name
was John W. Doty, that I was from Troy and trying to find my way to Canada to seek
after my relations.

This seemed to satisfy the people. I was given a good supper and sent to bed and
never did I sleep sweeter. It was morning before I thought a minute had passed. I did not
wake until roused up, the sun fully over an hour high. I got up, went out in the yard and
washed, and felt much refreshed, tho [sic] quite stiff and sore. I eat breakfast with the
family, was kindly treated, thanked them for their hospitality and started on for Utica,
which I was informed was but eight miles distant. I now began to feel quite safe from
pursuit and took my journey more leisurely. I made up my mind that from this time and
in all time to come to call myself John W. Doty. Why I selected that particular name I
cannot tell. It was the first that came to mind when asked the previous evening and I
made up my mind to retain it. I never expected to see or hear from any of my relations
and had no desire to at this time. The only trouble now was I had no money and was
consequently compelled to beg food and lodging, and this was truly mortifying. I was
often denied and turned away and sometimes treated very kindly. As I knew no one and
no one knew me I did not repine at any refusal I met with. I felt that I was free from my
uncle and that was an antidote to all my ills.

I got the Utica about noon, but did not stop. I enquired my way through the town
and to the road to Canada and soon found myself on the Sacketts Harbor road. While
trudging along leisurely I was overtaken by an old man carrying a good sized pack on his
back and to whom I soon attached myself as a traveling companion, plying him with
questions about Canada. I found him very communicative and soon learned that he was
on his way to Canada and that he had children living there. I asked him to let me go with
him. At first he said yes, and seemed pleased with having my company, but in the course
of our conversation, he soon found that I had no means of paying my way, which quickly
changed his tune, tho [sic] he did not immediately turn me off. That night the old man
very kindly procured me supper and lodging. I stuck to him all the next day, altho [sic] he
told me that he had no more money than he needed to pay his own way, yet I was not dispose to leave him until I reached Canada.

When night again overtook us we stopped at a farm house, the old man informing the people that he had money to pay for his supper and lodging, but that I was a poor boy he had fell in with on the road and was destitute. We were both invited to stop without any charge. The next morning we made an early start and I suppose the old man had made up his mind to shake me off during this day as he commenced telling me many tales calculated to discourage me in my desire to reach Canada. He also represented the country we were passing through as decidedly preferable to any I would find in Canada. He told me I would find no difficulty in finding clever people and plenty of work not far away and urged me to stop and inquire.

When we arrived in the town of Martinsburg and had come to a fork in the road the old man insisted that I should take the left road and apply at the farm houses as I went along for work, and as an inducement to get clear of my company, he said if I did not find any to employ me, that about eight miles ahead the two roads again united, and then we could trudge along together. Feeling myself now intirely [sic] beyond the reach of pursuit from my uncle, and feeling confidence in what the old man had told me about the country and people, I concluded to follow his advice and accordingly branched off to the left. I did not, however, bid the old man good bye as I thought I should meet him again that night not having much confidence in finding employment. I immediately commenced making inquiry for work at every farm house I came to, but for some miles I met with no success and was not much disappointed. At last I met a man who told of one who wanted some help and the house was pointed out to me. I soon reached it and boldly walked in leaving my bundle outside the door. The family were just sitting down to dinner. I made my business known. Without reply or ceremony a chair was placed at the table and I was invited to sit down and eat dinner. I at first diffidently refused but it did not take much urging as I was very hungry. While at dinner I told my name (that is my assumed one) and said I had no parents and no home and that I was seeking employment at farming. In return I learned that the house I was in was owned by a man named Curtis (his given name I have forgotten) and that he and his wife, three children, hired man and woman, then at the dinner table constituted his family. To Mr. Curtis I made known my desire. He said that he wanted a boy, but he feared I was not big enough and strong enough to do the work he wanted done. He said his farm was a new one and that chopping and logging was the work mostly he wanted to hire done. I at once took a liking to the family in consequence of their frankness and kindness and resolved I would stay with them upon any terms if they would keep me and so I readily informed them. I said I only wanted a home and did not care about wages. Mr. Curtis then said, after councilling [sic] with his wife, that if I wanted to stay with him one year, that he would give me five dollars a month for the ensuing six months ($30.-) payable in the fall in clothing to be made up in the house the same as his clothing and the following six months I might go to school and do chores night and morning for my board, he paying for my schooling and books.

This more than met my expectations. I thought of $30- as a fortune. Of course I readily and cheerfully accepted his offer. My bundle was brought into the house, opened
and examined, the dirty clothes taken out for wash and the ragged ones for mending. By
the next morning I was cleaned up and decently attired. I was furnished with a clean bed
in the garrett [sic] and in all respects made to feel that I was one of the family. This Mr.
Curtis and his wife were very intelligent people. They had emigrated from Connecticut
and settled no this farm on which they now lived some years previously. They were strict
Methodists, lived happily, and made all around them pleasant. I was delighted with my
new home and went to work with a light and cheerful heart, giving myself no further
thoughts about my uncle or relations. In a few days I was so happy and contented that the
time passed like a blissful dream. I worked on ‘till Nov. when my first six months
expired and agreeable to our bargain or rather I should say, the offer of Mr. Curtis, I was
furnished with my $30- worth of clothing in good homespun manufactured and made up
in the family under my own eyes. This $30- worth of clothing furnished me all I needed
for comfort and I felt proud of my appearance. But O how ignorant I was, but happily for
me then I did not know it.

I now commenced going to school in accordance with the spring arrangement, by
labor morning and evenings, called doing chores. This was the first time I had
been to school since my grandmothers death when I was but ten years old. I had nearly
forgotten all I had ever learned and could not read the simplest words. In writing and
arithmetic I knew nothing. During the past five years I had not seen a schoolbook and no
one had offered to teach me anything. I went to a country school this winter four months
and done tolerably well.

In the spring (1821) when my year was up with Mr. Curtis I got a notion that I
must learn a trade – that of a carpenter I fancied most. Mr. Curtis offered me six dollars a
month for the next six months, with schooling at the same as the past year and advised
me to stay with him another year, and then it would be time enough for me to learn a
trade, but I most respectfully declined. After some time spent in looking round I at last
found a man named Talmage who offered me six dollars a month to work with him, one
half money and the other half store pay. I accepted his offer and commenced work the
middle of May. I soon learned that Talmage was but an indifferent mechanic, was very
poor, labored hard to make ends meet, was an ignorant man, tho [sic] honest and well
meaning. He had a wife but no children. His business was mostly in building rough
country barns and sheds, so that I had but little prospect of learning anything beyond
hewing lumber, boring anger holes, morticing [sic] and driving nails- of all this dull
prospect I thought nothing at the time. I went to work with zeal, pleased with the idea of
learning a trade and getting at the same time six dollars a month.

During the summer our work was very laborious, as we had to walk most of the
time from three to five miles night and morning to our different jobs. Talmage took all
his work at low prices and took anything he could get in payment. The result was when
fall came round he had made but a a [sic] scanty living out of our united labor and had
nothing to pay me for my six months labor, while I had worn out my clothing in his
service. I had during the summer received a few small store orders and of course paid
double price for the few things I got. I was now in real need of some winter clothing. I
felt a good deal discouraged. But Talmage and his wife were so kind and talked to me so
much that I concluded would not leave them. During the winter Talmage had no work and our fare became quite scanty. He had no credit and absolute ant threatened us. In this dilemma we got a few boards and went to work in the house and made up a lot of small boxes for family uses- such as sugar and candle boxes with sliding lids. These boxes we tried to exchange for provisions round the neighborhood, but no one wanted them. It was agreed that I should hire a horse and sleigh for a few days and start out on a peddling tour with a load of our boxes, among the farmers, taking anything in payment I could get. I accordingly started out and after a four days tour I returned with their value in wheat, butter, potatoes, and a little money, having met with success for beyond our expectations. This replenished our table and also enabled me to get a few necessary articles of clothing. In a subsequent peddling tour I obtained some home spun cloth which I got made up. In this manner we worked through the winter tolerable comfortable [sic].

In the spring of 1822 we commenced work again at such jobs as we could pick up about the country, mostly rough hard work. Talmage generally got one dollar a day and I got fifty cents, taking anything in payment we could get but no money. Times were dull-no money in the country—most all trade was barter. When harvest came we went into the fields and worked for one bushel of wheat each per day for over a month. This of course supplied us with bread, but wheat was selling for fifty cents a bushel in store pay. Rye 37 cents- corn the same. There was indeed no market for anything but potash. Everybody was poor and lived cheaply. The country was new and no means of transportation except over rough roads 150 miles and more to Albany. We made but a scanty living this summer with all our hard work, and very little laid up for winter. I was getting bare of clothing and no prospect ahead of bettering my condition by remaining with Talmage. As to learning a serviceable trade with him that was out of the question. He was but a rough botch of a carpenter at best and had neither talent or means to get any good jobs. I had already worked a year and a half for nothing. The winter had set in again and at that season I could not do more than earn my victuals. I was compelled to try and live the winter out with Talmage. I now regretted I had no continued to live with Mr. Curtis where I should had the advantage of schooling, but my foolish pride kept me from returning to him. Mr. Curtis frequently told me I had better come back to him. I was now getting to be a stout boy, almost a man in size and strength and I just began to realize how ignorant I was. While with Talmage I had no opportunity of going to school a single day and neither he nor his wife were capable of instructing me in anything. They were good, kind hearted, well meaning ignorant people who had no books and never read a book in their lives. If they had a very moderate supply of the absolute necessaries of life, they were content. Not so with me. I longed to better my condition but how to accomplish it I could form no plans. Everything ahead looked dark and dreary.

When the spring of 1823 came round I told Talmage I could not stay with him any longer, that I must try some other kind of employment. He was anxious that I should remain with him another year, and at one time had almost persuaded me to do so; but the reflection that he was then indebted to me near one hundred dollars, which I knew he could not pay, and also that I had stuck by him near two years and in reality helped support him and his wife, had worked hard and was much worse clothed than I was when I first entered his employ, had learned nothing all combined determined me to quit him.
went back to my friend Mr. Curtis, but now he had help enough and could not employ me. I had so often refused his offers that he had supplied himself. He said I might stop with him until a found a place, but this kind of charity did not suit my independence and declined.

Nothing daunted, I deliberately packed up my poor and scanty bundle of clothes and started off once more to seek employment among strangers. I bid my friends all farewell and they wished me good luck. I had travelled on the road towards Sacketts Harbor about ten miles when I met a man who offered me fifty dollars for the next six months. I felt that this was a big offer and without any multiplicity of words I accepted it. The labor was of the most laborious kind, it being the clearing of new land, and making salts from the ashes. We lived most of the summer in temporary shanties, cooked our food and slept on hemlock boughs. What appetites [sic] we had bread and pork was our principal food. I served out my six months faithfully. At its expiration I was paid $20- in cash (which I looked upon as a fortune never having had so much money in all my life before) and received a store order for $30- with which I procured a new suit of winter clothing and some trinklets [sic]. How proud I felt! But now to reflect, what a poor simpleton I was yet, I was happy and contented, which after all is said, is the greatest of all blessings poor humanity can enjoy. How very few enjoy real happiness in any position in life. I sometimes think that there is as much real happiness in the mud hovel as thee is in the palace- or, on mud floors as there is on the finest carpets. My relations now I scarcely ever thought of, and my name of Jones was almost forgotten. Every thing [sic] with me just at this time, went along smoothly, and I have many times since wished myself as ignorant and happy as I was then. During the ensuing winter I lived about in the neighborhood among farmers, paying my board by occasionally assisting them in their work. I found every body [sic] kind and everything pleasant. I made frequent changes from one neighbor to another being generally invited by their boys of about my own age. When spring came round again (1824) I expected to find employment as I had the previous summer, but from some cause I failed in my expectations. I was now again in a new dilemma, what should I do? I did not much like farming. I was not, however, discouraged. I had yet a little money left. I again packed up my bundle of clothes, now somewhat increased in size, and started for Sacketts Harbor. I put up at a cheap tavern, board and lodging five shillings a day. It was near the last of May 1824, the weather was beautiful. I passed through the villages of Walertown and Brownville, stopped at both a day and night and made inquiries for work but met with no encouragement. I should not dare to enter a respectable looking tavern on account of the cost. I had but six dollars left when I came to Sacketts Harbor, and had formed no plans, but made up my mind I would stop there as long as my money lasted unless I sooner found employment. In strolling about the village I occasionally with well dressed soldiers from Madison Barracks- some of them all visited the house I was stopping at. I was induced by repeated invitations from these soldiers to visit the Barracks. I went and O how beautiful all things appeared to me. It [was] the first time I had ever seen a military establishment. I was perfectly delighted. The buildings and grounds took my fancy. The soldiers looked clean and happy. A fine band of music and the real uniforms captivated me I talked with every soldier I met, asking all sorts of unsophisticated questions, and as is usually the case among soldiers, the bright side was always pictured, and in consequence of all I saw and
heard, my imagination and hopes of enlisting for a soldier was worked up to the highest pitch. I reasoned with myself that I certainly could not in any event be worse off than I was at present. I had no home- no friends- no one to advise with. I could not find work. My little stock of money was fast melting away- a few days at most would leave me destitute- my clothes were much worn, and in view of all these discouraging circumstances I resolved to enlist for a soldier if I could. What boy at my age would not have done the same? I went to a scotchman [sic] named Morrison, the orderly Sergeant of one of the companies and asked him to take me to his Captain. He consented, but at the same time informed me, before starting, that he did not think I could be enlisted on account of my youth. He instructed me to say, when asked, that I was 21 years old and that I had no guardian, it being contrary to the law to enlist as a minor without the legal consent of his parents or guardian. After being thus instructed the Sergeant and myself started for the officer. I was inexperienced and bashful, and when brought into the presence of an officer I trembled in fear. The officer to whom I was taken examined me very closely and questioned me about my parents and relatives, where I was born, where and how I had been employed. To all which I answered in the most unsophisticated manner, blending truth and falsehood together in the most clumsy manner. I said as near as I can remember, that I was seeking work, that I had no parents, and no one to look to, that I should like to be a soldier and if he would take me I would do the best I could. I also told him truthfully where I had worked during the past three years. The officer replied that he would go with me and see the General. The General as he was called (at this time I knew no names and not even the meaning of titles) asked me nearly the same questions over again, and I well remember when I answered that I was 21 years old, that all present smiled at my simplicity, knowing of course that I had answered from previous tutoring. The general finally said, well Captain, he appears a good sober boy, do as you please. I was then taken into a room, re-examined, measured, fully described, then stripped naked (This greatly alarmed me) strictly inspected by a doctor and sword in as an enlisted soldier in the service of the U.S. for the period of five years. Of all this ceremony I had no appreciation and did not understand.

This all took place on the 30th May 1824 I was 17 years and 8 months old, and from this day commences a new and important era in my life, and was undoubtedly the cause of a complete change in all my thoughts and aspirations.

The officer to whom I was first introduced was Captain Owen Ransom, a gentleman of fine talents, fine feelings and human character. To him I am indebted for all my after success in life and whose memory I have ever cherished a grateful rememberance [sic]. I shall have occasion frequently to mention his name in the course of this narative [sic] and always with commendation. The General to whom I was first taken by Capt. Ransom was Gen'l Hugh Brady, the commander of the 2nd Regt. of Infantry. He was also my first friend in after years and to him also I am under many obligations. Often have I reflected and tried to call to mind what my appearance must have been at this forlorn and destitute period of my life. I was but a mere stripling of a boy, dressed in course and not very clean homespun clothing, rough looking from hard labor and exposure, uneducated, ignorant of human nature and everything around me, and nothing in my speech or general appearance to recommend me to the notice of any one. Yet from
some unaccountable cause of which I could never account for, from the day I first enlisted, Capt. Ransom took a fancy to me. It may have been out of pity of my extreme ignorance and unsophisticated manners that he judged my morals were uncorrupted, and his sympathies were thereby excited. I can think of no other reasons.

The next day after I was enlisted Captain Ransom called me into his quarters and said to me, I feel sure that you are a good boy, have no bad habits and I want to do well by you. He then continued. The men of my company are mostly old soldiers, many of them drunkards, and some of them foul mouthed bad men. You, he said (speaking very seriously) must not associate with them when off duty, must keep yourself very neat and clean, pay particular to your drill, must do in all things just as he ordered, and that in due time I would probably be made a non-commissioned officer. He requested me particularly to always come to him for advice and instruction if I was ill treated and he assured me that if I done right [sic] I would always be protected. He said a great deal to me about the evils of intemperance and cautioned not to be persuaded to drink with the soldiers, as he assured me if I did I would soon be ruined, and in place of his respect, protection and kindness he should be compelled to punish me very severely. I felt greatly flattered. It was the first time that anyone had talked to me in such a manner, and I left the Captain fully determined that I would not be indeed under any circumstances to drink a drop of intoxicating liquor during my prospective five years service, and which determination I most religiously fulfilled. My drink during the whole of this five years service was water alone- no tea- no coffee. Soldiers at this time did not draw from the government either, coffee, tea or sugar.

I was now an enlisted soldier in Company “H” 2nd Regt. of U.S. Infantry and under the immediate command of Capt. Owen Ransom. I was now to abandon all my old habits, my homespun dress, my awkward manners, and to substitute the soldiers deportment and dress, to live on a soldiers rations, and learn a soldiers duty. These changes to me, at first appeared almost insurmountable, yet young ignorant and inexperienced as I was I had resolution to undertake almost any thing [sic] that had the remotest prospect of bettering my condition. I was furnished with my soldiers outfit and my bundle of homespun clothing stored away to be disposed of for my benefit whenever I should desire it. I commenced my drill on the second day and I will venture to say that a more awkward recruit was seldom found. I was however, anxious to learn and was all attention to instruction. I felt uncomfortable in my new dress. My feet were clumsy and I could not adjust my body, arms and shoulders to the required positions for some days. The drills were long and soon I dreaded them. The Sergeant under whom I was instructed was petulant and harsh in his language. Some of the old soldiers laughed at me which frequently brought the tears in my eyes. I was tempted often to report the sergeant to Capt. Ransom, but the fear of getting the ill will of the soldiers deterred me. I as very desirous of getting and retaining the good will of my comrades and consequently done everything I was told to do in the most prompt and cheerful manner, the consequence was I was made to do more than my share of the police work, such as bringing water, building fires, cooking, scrubbing and cleaning indoors and out about the company quarters. Whenever I met Capt. Ransom he always spoke to me kindly, and enquired how I got along. This greatly flattered me and served to keep my spirits up. I soon, however, began
to tire of a soldiers life in consequence of the constant restraint I was under. The sleeping
in a room with fifty men, mostly intemperate blackguards, whose manners and society I
detested, made me feel lonely and discontented- then again the manner of living did not
suit me near as well as the coarse country fare. At this period (1824) the soldiers ration
was much inferior to what it was in after years. The soldiers ration at this time consisted
of only bread and meat served out twice a day, with a gill of whiskey (this I never
touched) and a pint of watery bean soup at noon. No tea, coffee, or sugar allowed. The
breakfast at 8. o’clock [sic] in the morning consisted of six ounces of cold boiled pork
and nine ounces of poor bread. The dinner at one o’clock of the same allowance of bread
and pork and a pint of bean soup. No supper was allowed. The whole days ration being
served out as these two meals, if meals they could be called. If this ration was insufficient
or the soldier was desirous of any other food, he had to purchase it from the sutters (?)
store and it was charged to his pay and deducted out of the same. So that if the soldier
was desirous of enjoying the luxury of a little tea, coffee or sugar, his small pay of five
dollars a month would soon be consumed. The most of the men spent their whole pay in
the sutters (?) store in eating or drinking- mostly in drinking. I did not spend a cent. For
my whiskey ration I got nothing, not being allowed to sell it. I used to save a part of my
bread and meat to eat at night.

I worried through my drill. Then mounted guard and performed all the duties of a
soldier. Still I felt unhappy and dissatisfied. I kept myself aloof as much as possible from
all bad company, but I could not avoid my company companions night or day. I was in
fact an isolated being in the midst of hundreds. This made me the butt of the old soldiers,
because I declined to drink and carouse with them. I finally went to Capt. Ransom with
tears in my eyes and humbly begged to be discharged, giving him my reasons. He replied
that it was not in his power. He manifested much regret at my discontent, said it would
soon pass away, and that he would have me appointed a Corporal, also with my conduct
he said it was satisfactory. He flattered me with the assurance that I would make a good
soldier and that he would do all he could to make me contented and happy- said I must
not mind the soldiers, that they were naturally good hearted and only indulged in a little
fun. Tears of gratitude followed these remarks and I was completely disarmed.

Soon after this a detail of sixty men was ordered to proceed to work on the
military road running from Brownsville to Ogdensburg. I applied to Capt. Ransom to go
with this detachment. The road had been commenced some years previously and about
thirty miles of it completed. My reasons for desiring to go on this duty was the novelty of
change, and because all the men detailed for constant labor were paid an extra per diem
of 15 cents and this latter reason was a strong temptation. Fifteen cents a day at this
period of my life I looked upon as great. Capt. R. readily assented to my request, tho’
sic] he told me that I would soon wish myself back in the barracks, as I would see
nothing but hard work and hard fare. The extra, however, determined me to go. The
summer was well advanced and our time on the road could not be extended beyond the
middle of November on account of the frost. The detachment was organized under the
command of Capt. Tho. (?) Staniford (now Colonel). Our arms were turned into store,
and axes, shovels, and picks substituted in their place. In our knapsacks we only carried
fatigue clothing. We left our quarters at 5. O’clock AM, distance to where to commence
work thirty miles, and which placed we reached about sun-down, and pitched our tents. This was the first day I had marched as a soldier, and although I had no difficulty in keeping up all day, yet I was pretty well tired out. We were told off in squads of six to each tent, cut hemlock boughs for bedding, eat [sic] our bread and pork and retired for the night, our knapsacks serving as pillows. I laid down at dark and it did not seem to me that a minute had elapsed before the drum beat the next morning. But to my astonishment when I attempted to get up I found myself unable to raise my body. Upon examination it as found that my back had turned black like a bruise and my lower limbs were partially paralyzed. The day previous had been warm and carrying a heavy knapsack I had strained my back, and then laying on the damp ground and green hemlock boughs, I took cold, which settled in my back. I suffered no pain, but I could not move or even turn over. We had no doctor with us, were in a wilderness country ten miles or more from any settlement and of course nothing could be done until a doctor should visit us from the garrison at Sacketts Harbor. My comrades were kind and attentive to me, with my whiskey ration they bathed and rubbed my back night and morning, which soon relieved me, so that in five days I was able to walk about, tho’ [sic] it aws a long time before I completely got over it.

As soon as I was able to walk about with ease, Capt. Staniford, on ascertaining that I was strictly temperate, appointed me to serve out the whiskey ration to the men- a half gill to each man four times a day. This duty was light and I performed it to the satisfaction of all parties until our return in Nov. to Madison Barracks. During the whole summer on this road our rations was always scant, and great discontent among the men followed. When the cold nights came in the fall I suffered from cold, having but a single blanket to cover me; but I hung out. So far as I was personally concerned during this summers labors I got along smoothly with both officers and men, but I often witnessed scenes that made me shudder. The men, with but few exceptions, were a hard set; but the mode of punishment was inhumane. I saw many of them stripped naked (all but pants) and tied up to trees until 12 o’clock at night, their naked bodies literally covered with muskeetoes [sic] and blood. A more painful punishment could hardly be devised. Muskeetoes [sic] in these northern woods are very troublesome and sleep without protection impossible. I do not, however, propose going into any extended details of this summers working party. For myself I had no difficulty with any one. I was but a timid boy, said very little to those about me, and consequently did not excite the envy or jealousy of any of the command. I strictly minded my own business, performed my duty cheerfully, and being the only boy in the party I suppose I rather excited sympathy than otherwise.

Capt. Staniford was a harsh man in language and few escaped his tongue, still he treated me kindly and when we returned to our quarters in garrison, he gave Capt. Ransom a good account of my conduct. It was near the end of Nov. before we got settled. All hands were given a weeks [sic] liberty.

I will here remark that we left Maddison Barracks numbering 71 (?) men and returned with only 42 men as the rest having deserted into Canada during the summer.
Having now learned something of a soldiers [sic] duty, and become accustomed to a soldiers life, I did not heed the profanity and drunkenness around me. I had only one object in view and that was to keep in the confidence of Capt. Ransom, and thereby gain the promotion he had promised me. A corporals [sic] appointment was the highest of my ambition. With this, and $2 more pay a month, I thought my fortune would be made. What a poor simpleton I was! How strange and unaccountable mens [sic] minds do change, and how singularly different do they view things at different period when age and experience have taught them the relative value of men and things by which they are surrounded. I was at this time ambitious and almost feverish for the appointment for corporal, altho’ [sic] it would hardly add to my dignity and only increased my pay from $5 to $7 a month, yet to obtain this small advance in position was the achme [sic] of my ambition and expectations in all time to come. Such in most cases is, I believe human desires. They look to a certain advancement n money or station and when attained think they will be content and happy.

And yet we see that no sooner than are their longings realized than they begin to look and hope for some other object, and so on from some object to object, and finally are just as much dissatisfied when all objects are obtained, as they were when at the very bottom of human poverty and littleness. Such has even been with but rare exceptions, the workings of the human mind- this can never be satisfied. In many cases, the greater and more rapid is success in all undertakings, the greater is the dissatisfaction.

Having now been paid off four months pay, and extra pay, I had over $30- in money in my pocket. Did I not feel rich? Yes, and proud too. I no longer liked to be called a boy. In all this Capt. Ransom, tho’ [sic] a plain man himself, encouraged me I suppose to keep me out of bad company. And I am not fully convinced that it was my pride and self respect which saved me. I dressed better than my comrades, appeared neater in appearance, and felt too proud to associate with them when off duty. Instead of spending my money on whiskey it all went for dress and articles to adorn my person. Self pride and love of dress will generally save the youthful from low associations, as no well dressed person cares about being seen with vagrants. There are of course exceptions. This principle has been fully exemplified in the army. Since 1832, the soldiers have een much better clothed and fed than at any time previous to that date and the result was soon seen in the general character of the soldiers. The improvement this brought about in the army was introduced by Gen. Lewis Cass, when he was secretary of War.

All soldiers are not vagrants. The 2nd Reg. of Inft. to which I was attached were however, a pretty hard set of me, being mostly brutish soldiers who deserted from Canada. Drunkenness was almost universal among them and any youth thrown in constant association with such a class was soon destroyed in character and fell to the level of his associates.

On the 1st Jan. 1825, Capt. Ransom recommended me for promotion. I was accordingly appointed a corporal and this for a short time satisfied me. I now for the first time began to realize how ignorant I was, and to feel that it would be a serious drawback to any further promotion. I purchased a few school books and commenced studying, but
being compelled to spend my leisure hours in rooms filled with my reckless companions I made but little progress in learning. I had no one to teach me or help me along and I soon abandoned the notion of learning anything but to read, and to this one object I devoted much of my time and greatly improved. During the whole of the year 1825, I went along smoothly and enjoyed my self [sic] very well. Towards the close of that year I began to feel a desire for further promotion. Capt. Ransom continued his kindness and whenever we met he praised my good conduct and always cautioned me against the vices of his men. I do not think he was aware of my educational deficiencies as he never alluded to my studying. I had all the liberty I desired when off duty and I never went outside the garrison unless well dressed in citizens clothes. Towards the close of this year I was noticed by Gen’l Brady and Adjutant John Clitz. I presume through the recommendation of Capt. Ransom. They frequently spoke to me with approbation. All these little attentions greatly flattered my vanity and induced me to think myself of some little consequence. My orderly Sergeant was a clean well drilled soldier but he drank very hard and gave Capt. Ransom great trouble, still when he was sober he was an intelligent gentlemanly man; besides, he had a family which excited sympathy among the officers and his intemperance was tolerated. I was really the only truly temperate man in the whole company of enlisted men, all the rest at times drank to intoxication. Near the close of the year Capt. Ransom had a long conversation with me, in which he intimated that at some future day, not distant, he intended making me his orderly Sergeant, and said I must qualify myself, and that I as yet too young and inexperienced to govern a company of men with judgment and discretion. My ambition was now aroused and I applied myself energetically, quietly and silently, to acquire what I thought the necessary information to perform the duties of an orderly Sergeant. But I had no proper instructor and dared not ask instruction from any one for fear my objects would be found out.

I should perhaps, in justice, have warned Morrison that unless he reformed, I was destined to supercede [sic] him in office. I did not however feel it my duty; besides, I was selfish and eager for his situation. Morrison had often been told by Capt. Ransom that he should be compelled to displace him, so he should have known his doom.

I went into the village of Sacketts Harbor and employed a teacher to instruct evenings when I was not on guard duty. This introduced me to a new society outside the garrison, with whom I spent a great portion of my leisure time, and where I picked some very needed information. I attended several dancing parties and during the whole winter enjoyed myself extremely well. In this manner things passed along until the latter part of April 1826, when all at once and when least expected, four companies of our garrison were ordered forthwith to proceed to Green Bay, then the territory of Michigan. It came on me like a thunder clap. I had just made a quite a number of young acquaintances, my youthful attachments were strong and I did not like the idea of thus being compelled to leave them.

At this date, Green Bay was considered almost out of the world and the distance to me seemed beyond calculation. I imparted my feelings to Capt. Ransom. He laughed at my simplicity and soon removed my objections by telling me that he should leave Morrison behind and intended to appoint me to his Orderly Sergeant. I was accordingly at
once appointed to the post of Orderly Sergeant over the heads of all the old Sergeants of
the Company- this raised quite brays of dissatisfaction among the old soldiers and for
some time engendered bad feelings against me. The idea that such a stripling [sic] as I
was and the youngest man in the company, being appointed to command them all, most
of them old enough to be my father, was thought to be disgraceful and the whole
company, with a few exceptions, waited on Capt. Ransom in a body and protested against
my appointment. I of course said nothing. Capt. R. replied to their protest that he alone
was responsible for my appointment and that if they did not at once return to duty and
treat me with the respect and obedience due to my station, that he would punish them. All
sullenly retired. In a few days by extra kind treatment the signs of dissatisfaction began to
disappear. My position now brought me almost hourly in conduct with Capt. Ransom as
well as other officers. I had separate quarter assigned to me and was not obliged to live
with the men or be among them only when on official duty.

Now it was that my ignorance was conspicuous. And I have no doubt but that
Capt. Ransom was disappointed. Indeed he told me so, and represented the absolute
necessity of my learning to read and write with ease. I could not at this time make up my
daily report or keep a roster of the companies details. Capt. R. immediately took it upon
himself to be my instructor and appointed hours for the purpose. He first aimed to learn
me to read and write so I could keep the company books and to instruct me in the army
regulations and military tactics. I applied all of my leisure time to my studies and
progressed finely. Capt. R. was a careful fine kind instructor. How I did respect and love
him.

But our westward journey or rather march was at hand and a good deal of
preparation was to be made. A steam boat was chartered to carry our four companies
numbering over 200 men to Fort Niagara at the weather end of lake Ontario. We
embarked with all our stores on the 8th June and landed at the Fort in about 30 hours.
Altho’ [sic] I had no one but myself to care for, and left no one behind me of any sort of
consequence still I started off from Maddison Barracks with a heavy heat at leaving a few
youthful companions. The companies of my Regt. had been stationed at Maddison
Barracks since the close of our last English War, and a great many of both officers and
soldiers had got families. The officers of course took their families with them, but the
soldiers, with the exception of three to each company, this being the regulation allowance
of married men, could not be permitted to go. The consequence was that 30 families were
left behind in a destitute condition, and these poor abandoned creatures, women and
children, crowded the wharf before we started, and begged with tears and cries to be
permitted to go with their parents and husbands. This was a feeling sight but under army
regulations was unavoidable.

We set sail amid the beating of drums, firing of cannon and the cries and distress
of women and children. At fort Niagara we were joined by another Company of soldiers.
The next morning we took up our line of march in military order for Buffalo, distant 37
miles. We arrived at Niagara Falls, distance 14 miles, about 10 o’clock, AM and were
allowed half an hour to view that wonderful work [of] nature, after which we marched on
until night. We encamped at Tonawanda Creek, which we crossed the next morning in a
large scow, and reached the outskirts of Buffalo in the middle of the day. I stood this
march finely altho the weather was very warm- quite a number of our men broke
down and did not join us until the next day. We were detained some days waiting for
means of transportation up the lakes and at last was compelled to leave Buffalo with our
five companies packed on board a miserable little steamer. The officers wives and
children filled the cabins. The soldiers wives and children were stowed in a hot hold on
the top of our baggage and stores. All the officers men occupied the decks and so
crowded was every part of the steamer that there were not sufficient deck room for all to
lie down at once. After the lapse of 24 hours at sea we had a dirty vessel. The most filthy
in all respects I ever witnessed before or since. Fortunately the weather continued
pleasant. We passed Detroit, stopping but a short time to take in wood, no one being
allowed to land, and proceeded up the river. On lake St. Clair we run aground and was
detained 24 hours, but with great labor got off and proceed on our way across lake Huron
and arrived at Mackinack on the third day from Buffalo. Here as at Detroit we only
stopped to take in wood. We crossed Lake Michigan on the fourth day and on the fifth
run into Fox river at the western end of Green Bay, and landed at Fort Howard our place
of destination. During this trip I witnessed a good deal of suffering and sickness,
especially among the women and children. Before leaving Buffalo many of the men had
gorged themselves with food and liquor and when sea sickness came on coupled with
dissipation they were objects of pity. The poor women and children shut down in the dark
hot hold suffered greatly. As for myself I got along very well, being in the position of
Orderly Sergeant I fared as well as the officers and at night selected a safe place on deck
to sleep.

At Green Bay we expected to occupy Fort Howard, but finding it garrisoned by
the 3rd Regt. of Infantry, we were ordered into camp outside the fort. The 3rd Inft. Were
under orders to proceed to Jefferson Barracks, via the Portage, on our arrival but did not
go for some weeks in consequence of a general quarrel among the officers, the arrest of a
number and a general Court Martial. It was at the instance of James Watson Webb,
afterward editor of the New York Courrir [sic] an Inquirer, and for many years a leading
position, that this court Martial was organized. Webb at this time was a young army
officer and Adjutant of his Regt. (the 3rd Inft.) Colonel McNeal commanding. Webb was
charged with being the author of most of the quarrels and troubles in his Regiment all
the officers he preferred charges against and who were tried by this court were acquitted
and the consequence was that Webb resigned.

In due time the 3rd Regt. relinquished the Fort and our Regt. took possession. Fort
Howard was an old military station erected as a defence [sic] against the Indians- Built of
logs, two stories high, in four long buildings, forming a square, the whole surrounded by
pickets about 12 feet high and having bastions at the angles on which were mounted field
guns. The pickets were perceived all round with loop holes for musketry about eight feet
from the ground. The rooms for quarters were large and had it not been for bed-bugs,
with which the logs were filled, would have been comfortable. I was assigned a good
room adjoining my company and was most pleasantly situated.
There was now much talk about Indian difficulties, and a treaty was about being negotiated a few miles above us on the Fox river under the supervision of Genl. Lewis Cass, at this time Governor of Mich. Territory. Altho’ a great deal was said and no little excitement raised about an immediate Indian War, yet I did not give myself much trouble about it. I devoted all my leisure time to my studies under instruction of Capt. R. the Indian treaty was held in August near Lake Winnebago and resulted in a settlement of the difficulties with all the tribes except the Winnebagoes, who refused to attend the general treaty meeting called by Genl. Cass. Soon after the breaking up of this treaty meeting of the several tribes, an expedition was ordered to be fitted out from Green Bay and other places, to march into the Winnebago region near the portage of the Fox and Wisconsin rivers and bring that tribe to terms by force. This draft of men from our command reduced our garrison forces to less than one hundred. Immense numbers of friendly Indians assembled around Fort Howard at this time. They had just received presents and been paid their annuities and for a long time drunkenness and dancing occupied their time. For nearly two months they hung round the Fort and night and day their pow-wows was incessant. They roused themselves about 9. o’clock in the morning and resorted to the various concealed places where white men kept whiskey and trading stores and commenced eating and drinking during the day and at night collected in large groups in the neighborhood of their loges, each tribe by itself, when they would commence their pow-wows and dances, which was kept up more than half the night, or until drunkenness and fatigue overcame them. It used to amuse me greatly to witness these scenes, debasing as they were, but at this time I did not reason upon the villainy practiced upon these poor people by the white sharpers who robbed them of the bounties given them by the U.S. government. They parted with everything of value they had for whiskey and when all was gone, starvation stared them in the face, and the government compelled to issue them rations to keep them alive, especially in winter. However, it is not my purpose to go into details in this jumbled narrative, shewing the habits, character, or treatment of Indians, altho’ I had abundant chance for observation, or indeed of any class of people met with in my travels, except such as have in some manner become connected with my own history. Were I to attempt even a faint description of either the people or country where chance threw me in my wandering I should extend my remarks beyond what is contemplated, besides, it would not probably be of any interest to those for whom this record is specially intended. Another and potent reason I that I have not the ability to dress up an extended narrative in pleasing style. Then again, the past few years of extended settlements, railroads and telegraphs have made our country and people known to every school boy.

The expedition against the Winnebagoes returned in about two months, having accomplished the objects of the expedition.

During the fall, winter, and spring of 1826&27 I pursued my studies and lived really a happy and contented life. My duties were light and easy. I had not much society, nor did I seek any. I so improved in learning what I could read, rite cipher quite well and had gained some knowledge of geography. I occasionally strolled a few miles round the country and done a little fishing. I used to take great pleasure in visiting the Indian camps and conversing with them, by which means I soon acquired a tolerable degree of
fluency in speaking their language and thereby considerable knowledge of their habits.

The country abounded in wild game and my table was well supplied. Fish was also plenty. A soldier done my cooking and kept my room neat and clean. What a change for me! In the summer I first began to regret that I had changed my name, and to have a desire to hear from my mother and brothers. My success inclined me to wish that my relations should know it. Up to this time I had not heard a word from any of my relations since I ran away from my Uncle James, six years previously, and in all that time I had not disclosed my true name to any one. When I ran away I was a boy, now I was a man. Then I was afraid of my Uncle, now all fear was dispelled. It was fear alone of my uncle which induced me to change my name, and thus, as I then thought forever putting it out his power to find me out and force me back into his service. I was a poor ignorant foolish boy and did not look beyond any period, save my escape. Of manhood I had no conception.

Altho’ I had not many reason for feeling myself under obligations to any of my relations, still the more I thought of my position and the future, the greater became my desire to assume my true name, and to hear from my relatives. I had left a mother and two brothers and I particularly desired to hear from them if living. I knew nothing about them and felt I ought to have some one of my relatives to write to and care for. I cogitated the matter over in my mind for some time. My pride revolted at the idea of making the disclosure of my military associates. I thought I should be laughed at and that my dignity and respect would be lessened. Still I could not rest satisfied and finally concluded to disclose the whole truth of my false position to my never failing friend Capt. Ransom and be governed by his advice. My courage almost failed me. It was a painful a mortifying task, for I did not like to have it said that I had for over six years been under a fictitious name- one too, under which my vanity (tho’ not in my opinion altogether undeservedly) had been greatly flattered by all with whom I had been associated.

Both officers and soldiers during the past three years had shown me great respect and I hoped not to forfeit their good opinion. At lat I screwed up my courage and on the 4th July when all was hilarity at the Fort, I went to Capt. R. quarters in the most private manner and after some stammering and choking I told him all my history and disclosed to him my feelings. The captain was of course somewhat surprised, and amused at my fear and seriousness, but he at once manifested his confidence in my integrity, and praised me for my honestly. He soon removed all my scruples, but advised me to say nothing about it to any one until he should tell me. After I left Capt R. it occurred to me that I would ask for a furlough for the purpose of going one time to Lowville Academy in the state of N.Y. during the ensuing winter. During my absence I thought my name could be changed on the rolls of the company and the matter explained and published to the Regt. so that when I returned in the spring it would be an old story. I was foolishly sensitive about what I imagined would be said.
I had saved upwards of $200 from my small pay and felt quite rich, and thought I could not spend it better than by adding a little to my knowledge by a term at school and a visit to some of my relatives, who I supposed thought me dead or in some prison far away.

I made known my desires for Capt. R the next day and he said he would see Genl. Brady on the subject and would do what he could for me. A month passed over and I began to fear that I should not obtain the desired leave of absence, as I heard the General had objections to giving furloughs for so long a period. Capt. R. at last disclosed to the Genl. the reasons which actuated me in desiring so long a leave of absence. This had the effect of removing his scruples and I was granted a furlough for eight months from the 1st day of Oct. 1827 on which day I was twenty one years old. About the same time, Genl. Brady was ordered to establish his Head Quarters had Detroit, to which he placed he and his Adjutant John Clitz removed in October.

I made all necessary preparations [sic] for leaving and took passage in a small schooner for Detroit. On our way we stopped three days at Mackinac, which place I pretty thoroughly explored. At Detroit I stopped two days and thoroughly explored the old city. I took passage in a sail Bessel for Buffalo where I arrived on the 30th, and here for the first time since I ran away from my uncle I assumed my right name. It was at first rather awkward and I had to guard myself from unconsciously writing and signing the name I had answered to for so many years. But at this time I felt independent joyous and happy. I felt myself to be not only a man, but a free man, and had the foolish vanity to consider myself of some little consequence among men, tho’ [sic] for what reason I cannot now tell, except it was my ignorance of human nature, and having had no experience in business among the men of the world. I put up at a respectable Hotel [sic] and remained five days in Buffalo. I then took a line canal packer boat for Utiea, and the stage from thence to Lowville, where I arrived the middle of November. I immediately called on the principal of the Academy, Mr. Taylor, and bargained for one quarters tuition and board, and paid therefore $50 in advance. I commenced my studies the net day.

I was now within a few miles of my old friends Curtis and Talmage, with whom I had first lived, as herein related, but having assumed my right name of which they had never heard, I did not call on them or make known to them my presence in the county. This neglect I have always since regretted, as no opportunity has ever since occurred. I now wrote to my brother Christopher, supposing him still in Duanesburgh where I left him a boy living with my grandfather. After about two weeks I received his reply, my letter having been forwarded to him at his place of residence in New Berlin, Chenago Co. his letter was the first I had heard from any one of my relatives since I left them, and my letter was the first word any one of them had heard from me. From my brother letter I learned that both my grandfather and grandmother Jones were dead. I was also informed of the changes that had taken place among my Duanesburgh relatives. Christopher wrote me a very full account, informing me among other things that he was married. Of our brother John F. or any of our Connecticut relatives he knew nothing about. Our mother was still in Duanesburgh, but he knew very little about her, except that she was a poor
unfortunate woman, who earned by her labor a scanty subsistence. I at once made up my mind that I would go and see my brother as soon as my quarter was out at the Academy, and so I informed him.

I found that my brother had left for Hudson City and had there found employment, and that his wife was at her fathers, eight miles distance. I was in a quandary. I turned my enquiries for some of my uncles whose names I had learned from my brothers letter, and who lived in that neighborhood. To my great joy I learned that Peter Jones, John Jones, Seah Baker and Daniel Scribner, all lived not far away. It being now after sun-down and finding that Uncle Scribner resided only one mile off, I left my luggage at the stage house and enquired my way to his house where I soon arrived and made myself known.

I was most graciously received and most kindly welcomed to remain at his house as long as I pleased. The family consisted of my Uncle and Aunt and two children about my own age, Gamabil (?) and Amanda. They occupied a good farm and had everything around them to make a farmers family happy and comfortable. The next morning my trunk was sent for and I found myself in good quarters, with an agreeable family, and freely offered a home until navigation opened in the spring so I could rejoin my Regiment at Fort Howard. I gave up a visit to Duanesburgh and concluded to remain in New Berlin. Here I learned for the first time a pretty general history of my relations, and also, the opinions and speculations that had been indulged in as it regarded my character and probable fate.

My uncle had a good team of horses, the sleighing was good and a round of visiting, accompanied by my cousins Gamabil and Amanda, followed. I was carried about among my relatives and their acquaintances for miles round the country. We visited my brothers wife, who at this time had an infant daughter. (this was the first time I had seen her). My brother Christopher I did not see during my stay this winter, this I regretted.

The winter and spring soon passed an the middle of April brought round the time I had set to start on my return to join my company. As the time approached for parting with these new found kind friends it was with regret, but I had no alternative, go I must. Even if I could have stayed an indefinite period of time, what could I have done? I could not expect to be supported as an idler and did not mean to be.

I will remark that my residence with my Uncle Daniel Scriber during the two months I had been in New Berlin was the most happy two months I had ever spent, and to this day I have ever cherished the most grateful feelings towards his whole family for the kindness and consideration I was received and treated. Uncle Daniel and his wife had kind hearts and extended to me the hospitalities of parents and their children treated at all times like a loving brother or sister. The news of my return spread rapidly and many I have no doubt called to see me out of curiosity.
I did not fail to make known the treatment I had received in my helpless boyhood days from my Uncle James. While I was in New Berlin my Uncle James made a call at Uncle Scribners and stopped one night. I met him as a stranger and no words passed between us. My hatred of him was so great that had he remained another night I should have left the house. To this day I have never been able to divest my mind of hatred towards him, altho’ [sic] he has long since been called to his final account.

The middle of April came and I prepared for my journey. I found that my $200 was nearly gone and I found I should not have money enough to pay my way back to Green Bay. I made known my circumstances to my uncle and he immediately borrowed thirty dollars of [sic] one of his neighbor, the amount I required. In bidding my hospitable friends good bye all cried like children, and it seemed like parting for the first time from Father, Mother, Brother, and sister. I took the stage to Utica and from thence Canal Packet boat to Buffalo. Here I was detained for several days waiting for a sailing packet to Detroit. When we finally set sail our packet was crowded with passengers, and to add still more to the uncomfortableness [sic] of the vessel we had a long rough passage. However, we got through all safe. I immediately reported myself to Gen’l [sic] Brady, who I was informed that my company had just been ordered from Green Bay to Ford Brady, Sault de St Marie, near Lake Superior, to which place I was directed to proceed. Here I also learned that Cap’t [sic] Ransom had changed my name on the company’s rolls, and that all had been done to my entire satisfaction. This greatly gratified me.

I remained in Detroit until the 8th May before I found a small Schooner bound to Fort Brady. On this I took passage and crossed Lake Huron without mishap. We entered the mouth of St. Mary’s river on the 10th, but found so much floating ice that it was not thought prudent to venture up the river. We made a harbor at Drummonds Island, where was a small Indian trading station and a British Military post and a few soldiers. Here we spent several days/ Great numbers of Indians were on the island receiving their annual presents from the British authorities, such as blankets, calico, trinkets, etc. all was hilarity and noise. We at last set sail up the river, and altho’ [sic] the distance to Ford Brady was but 60 or 70 miles, we were three days on the river, owing to a strong head current and head winds and no winds. Our little vessel was the first arrival in the Spring and my company was of course behind me. I took up my quarters with a Sergeant Snow and awaited the arrival of my company. Having nothing to do, I exercised about the country. The scenery about the Fort is romantic and for a short time in the summer very beautiful. The nine months winter is cold and dreary. The falls of St. Marie is a beautiful sheet of water, the river being the outlet of Lake Superior. These falls are alive with white fish and speckled trout, and at this time of but little value, tho’ [sic] subsequently I am told the white fish trade became of importance. At this time a four loaf of bread would purchase from the Indians 30 lb. of fish. These fish were of a most excellent quality and made up the greater part of the daily diet of the inhabitants.

Fort Brady was built of logs, the buildings one story high, and all enclosed by Cedar Pickets 12 feet high sharpened at the top. The rooms used for quarters were all small, but warm and comfortable, especially so for this cold region.
Just outside the Ford was an Indian trading village, numbering some 800 to a
1000, whites, Indians, and half breeds, living mostly in shanties covered with white birth
bark. This place is, or was, or had been, the central starting point to the great mountain
regions of the North Western fur company traders. From this point they start out with
their goods and return with their furs annually. In consequence of this quite a large traffic
is carried on in summer. The Indians in the neighborhood, on both sides of the line (and
the river is the boundary between the U.S. and Canada) depend mostly on the bounties of
the two governments for subsistence.

In a few days my company made its appearance. This was a joyful meeting for
me after so long a separation from my comrades. All manifested pleasure at meeting.
Quarters were soon prepared for us and we settled down to a regular soldiers [sic] life.
The summer opened beautifully in June, the whole country teeming with life, and my
young mind fully alive and participating in the beauties and pleasures by which, for the
time being, I was surrounded. Although little of the refinements of civilized life were
visible, yet the sports of the river and woods, and the Indian romance pleased me. Our
commanding officer was a pleasant gentleman. Hunting, fishing and evening dances were
our principal amusements.

I drew my eight months back pay and rations and remitted to my Uncle the $30 he
had loaned me, and for $10 as a present to the females, with my grateful thanks for their
kindness. I also made a remittance of $20 to my mother in Duanesburgh, who I had
learned was poor and needy. Thus my conscience and feelings were satisfied. The
summer passed rapidly away and we began making the usual preparations for a long
winter by laying in a large stock of firewood, but about the 1st of Oct. without expect-
ing any change in our station, we suddenly received orders to return to Madison Barracks.
This was to me really pleasing news. To return again to Sacketts Harbor and civilization
and thereby escape a long dreary winter was indeed joyful news to our whole company. I
should again meeting [sic] my early friends whom I had so reluctantly left two years
before. All preparations were speedily [sic] made and on the 10th Oct., in the midst of a
snow storm we set sail for Buffalo. A strong north west wind carried us across Lake
Huron and down to Detroit in three days. Here we stopped one day and sailed on to
Buffalo. From thence we marched by land via Niagara Falls, to Youngstown, near Fort
Niagara.

At this place we embarked our command on two small schooners, being the only
means of transportation we could procure to carry us down the Lake to Sacketts Harbor.
The first night after getting well out into the Lake a storm came on and our little crafts
were soon separated. The one on which I was on came near shipwreck owing to a lack of
ballast. We were, however, lucky enough to make a harbor on the Canada side of the
lake. During the night of the storm we supposed ourselves lost. The whole company were
in the hold of the vessel- the hatches barred down so that not a man could get on deck- no
one slept [sic] a wink that night. Such was the violent motion of the vessel that the men
were thrown from side to side over each other whether lying down or standing up, and
many were badly bruised. It was the longest night I ever experienced. Our sails were
much injured. Fortunately our little craft remained tight. At the end of two days the wind
came round fair, we set sail and reached our destination without further accident. We landed and immediately took possession of our old quarters in Maddison Barracks and after a few days settled down comfortably for the winter. It was a treat to get back again into the section of country where all the comforts of life were abundant and cheap and could be found society conjenial [sic] to the tastes and feelings of all. I very soon hunted up my old acquaintances and was welcomed by all wherever I went. I had liberty to go and come when and where I pleased when not on duty, and I made it a point never to neglect them inside the garrison. I was enabled to spend nearly half my time in the village, especially evenings. During the winter a continued round of parties and balls was kept up many of which I participated in/ whenever my name was mentioned I was highly recommended and wherever I went I experienced nothing but kindness and hospitality. It as during this winter that my ambition was first excited to be something of more importance than an Enlisted Soldier. I long thought over what should I engage in when my enlistment expired. I knew that I had no qualifications for any thing [sic] in civil life, and if I had, I had no money, and as to farming I had had enough of that. I most desired to get a commission in the army, but how to proceed I did not know, and my education was too limited. I knew that all vacancies in the army had for ten years been filled only from the graduates of the Military Academy at West Point. No appointments or promotions had been made from soldiers.

I finally secretly settled in my own mind (and here I greatly erred in having any secrets from my army friends, especially Capt. Ransom) that when my time expired in the spring, I would obtain recommendations of a general character from the officers who knew me, and go to Washington and make a personal application to the President for a commission. Gen’l [sic] Jackson has just been elected and would be inaugurated in March, and my time would expire on the 30th May, following. I very foolishly kept my council to myself, supposing my aspirations might not be approbated, and I be persuaded to re-enlist. This determined me to make the move I did. I did not count the chances against me or think of my position in case of failure.

When question (as I often was) by my friends, both by officers and citizens, what I intended to do when my time was out, I answered that I should return to my relatives. In all this I done very wrong, for had I at that time made known my desires, I should have obtained all the assistance I wished. This was afterwards shown me. However, I thought differently, and failed in my undertaking, as the sequel will show.

On the 1st May, I applied for a furlough for the balance of my time. It was readily granted, my discharge made out, and I made arrangements very secretly for an immediate journey to Washington without communicating my intentions to my most intimate friends.

My acquaintances called on me and tendered their best wishes and assistance and said goodbye. From all the officers of the Regiment, present at this time at Maddison Barracks, headed by General Brady, I received strong testimonials in writing (see the same now bound up in a book) and also a complimentary letter from several citizens. With these papers in my pocket, and none of them specially addressed to any particular
person, or for any specific employment, I bid my army associates farewell and started on my route to Washington. I only had about $100 in money when discharged, barely enough to bear my expenses to Washington and maintain me there a few days. Yet with this fact staring me in the face, I was determined to go, feeling confident I should succeed with Gen’l [sic] Jackson in getting what I wanted.

I made the journey to Washington in due time. I soon found that I had got out of my element. I knew no one, was ignorant of how I should act or proceed, was so diffident that I lost all my confidence in myself and had not courage to say a word. After strolling about Washington and round the Presidents house for some days fearful to go in my spirits began to sink. I now saw myself as I really was - in a strange city, far from any one I knew, with but little money in my pocket. Now I wished myself back at Sacketts Harbor. I really believe that if I had had money enough to have paid my expenses back I should have returned without making any effort to see the president. I would now have been glad to re-enlist in my old company and give up all idea of advancement. I was almost driven to desperation. I knew that I should soon be destitute of money and must at once do something. In this state of despondency I plucked up a little courage and walked into the Presidential Mansion. I had been to the door a dozen times before and had not dared to enter. My heart beat violently, my knees trembled. I was just able to say I wanted to see Gen’l [sic] Jackson. I was offered a seat and told to wait. After the lapse of about half an hour I was invited into the presence of Gen’l Jackson. I never shall forget my feelings at that moment. My speech failed me and I came near sinking down on the floor. I stood before the president speechless, he arose from his seat took me by the hand and led me to a seat and sat down along side of me. Never was I so disappointed. I was met halfway across the room by a plain old gentleman, who took my trembling hand in the kindest and most unostentatious manner, and fatherly way, seemingly on purpose to remove my embarrassment. My idea was instantly changed. In a few minutes my diffidence vanished and I found myself in a free and unreserved conversation with one of the plainest and most unpretending gentlemen in the country. And I here remark that Gen’l [sic] Jackson was one of the most gentle and kind of men.

I made known the object of my visit and handed out my testimonials of character. After looking them over the General remarked that these testimonials were very honorable, that Gen’l [sic] Brady was his personal friend and that he would see what could be done for me. He immediately took up a pen and wrote a note to the Secretary of War, John H. Eaton, “if not incompatible with the rules of the public service, to grant my request,” and if so, to give me some other public employment, adding that “such memorials (referring to my recommendations) ought not to be lost to the army” - (this letter of Gen’l [sic] Jackson is bound up with my other papers of this date.)

I thanked the President, took his letter (it was an open one) and my recommendations and went direct to the office of Gen’l [sic] Eaton, Secretary of War, feeling the utmost confidence that my long cherished hopes would now be realized. The Secretary received me kindly and after reading my recommendations and the Presidents letter, he frankly remarked that he doubted if I could be commissioned in the army, and asked me if there were not some other position which would suit me as well. I replied that I had been a soldier since my boyhood and did not feel that I was competent to fill any
civil situation. He then sent for Gen’l [sic] McComb, Commander in Chief of the army. He soon came in and my papers were handed him and my request made known. He at once said it was impossible to commission me, that it would be doing injustice to the graduating class at West Point, and argued with the Secretary against any appointments being made from the line of the army, or from civil life, arguing very strenuously, that it would be changing the whole military system as now organized. He said that he would at once see General Jackson on the subject. His manner was very earnest, and if I had had half sense I should seen and understood at once that my chance of success in opposition to the Commanding General was very meagre [sic], and should have turned my attention to obtain some other position. It was a damper to my hopes, but I did not despair. The Secretary told me to call again the next day. I accordingly returned to my lodgings with many doubts and many hopes.

That evening I accidentally met an officer of my Regiment, Capt. John Bradly, who was a good deal surprised at meeting me in Washington.

To him I made known what I had been doing and how matters then stood. I appealed to him for advice. He entered into my cause cheerfully and proffered to go with me next day to see the Sec. of War and do what he could. We accordingly called at the War Office together. Capt. Bradley had himself been an Enlisted Soldier and was among the last of the promotions from the ranks some ten years previously. At the War office we were informed that Gen’l [sic] McComb had seen the President and that he did not think it best to interfere with the existing army regulations. I was again asked if I did not desire something else. I replied that I would think about it. Capt. Bradly advised me not to give up yet and proffered to go with me to the Gen’l [sic] Jackson. We did so, and found ready admittance. Capt. B. acting as spokesman represented my position to the President and urged my appointment in most eloquent terms. But he replied that he regretted he could not under all the circumstances, interfere with the rights of the graduating class at West Point, that he had so pledged himself to Gen’l [sic] Mccomb. He said my recommendations were of the highest and most satisfactory character and he regretted that they had not been more specific in recommending me for the appointment I sought. He then recommended me to return to my Regiment at Sacketts Harbor, and say to Gen’l Brady for him that if I was regularly recommended for promotion from Regimental Headquarts [sic], and forwarded to him, he would see what he could do after the graduating class on the 1st of July had been disposed of. The President intimated to Capt. B. that he regretted my recommendations had not been more specific in stating what I desired. This again shewed [sic] me how I had erred in not letting my friends know what I was seeking for before I left them, and I ready felt ashamed of my folly. It was now too late to repent and I had no alternative but to brave it out. Capt. Bradley relieved me very much by writing to Gen’l Brady and Capt. Ransom explaining our last interview with the President, which I thought would satisfy them.

I started back for Sacketts Harbor with barely money enough to pay fare through in the shortest possible time- then six days. The first four days I done with one meal a day, not exceeding 25 cents each- the fifth day I eat nothing, but it brought me to Utica within one day of Sacketts Harbor. Here my funds were entirely exhausted. I thought of a
young man (whose father lived in Utica) with whom I was acquainted at Lowville Academy. I soon hunted him up and found him at home. I applied to him for a loan of $10. He hesitated, and offered me $5. This was a little mortifying, but what could I do? I took the $5 and immediately started off. That night at 10 o’clock I was set down in the street at Sacketts Harbor penniless and $5 in debt, a pauper on my friends. I felt humiliated. As soon as I could the next morning I called on Capt. Ransom and related to him all of the particulars of my journey to Washington and my present destitute condition. He was (and justly so) greatly surprised at my return and censured me in strong language (which brought the tears) for not letting him know honestly what were my desires, and for not reposing confidence in him after five years of service together, him too who had made me all I was of any consequence. I felt the full force of his remarks- the rebuke was painful, but I felt it was just. I asked for pardon and excused myself as best I could.

Nothing but my inexperience and ignorance saved me from the loss of my best friend.

Capt. Ransom forgave me and immediately advanced me $15. Five of which I sent to Utica at once. Capt R. went with me to Gen’l Brady and related to him a full account of my journey and the message from Gen’l Jackson, which was also set forth in Capt. Bradly [sic] letters, so that my veracity was not questioned, or my good intentions doubted.

A recommendation was at once drawn up by Adjutant Clitz and within 24 hours signed by every officer at Maddison Barracks, and forwarded to Gen’l Jackson. For the time being my mind was relieved and I felt quite satisfied that in due time I should obtain the appointment I desired. The present serious matter with me was how I should be able to live without money or employment, but here again my friend Capt. Ransom came to my relief. He said I must not engage in any employment that would degrade me, should I get a commission. In a few days I was informed that a situation had been obtained for me to act as the Agent of the American Line of Steamers running from Lewiston down Lake Ontario to Ogdensburg, and that I was to repair to Niagara Falls and open an office. My pay was to be $25 a month and my expenses paid by the Steam Boat Co. This was good news. I received my instructions and by the first boat up the lake went to the Falls and took up my residence at Gen’l Whitney’s hotel on the American side.

Here I spent some months of the summer. My duties called me to Buffalo once a week, and I soon found myself constantly associated with the great pleasure going people, who annually resort to Niagara Falls in the summer months to spend their time and money. So pleasantly was my time passed for some weeks that I almost forgot my application for a commission and scarcely gave it a thought. My associations were such, that altho’ [sic] all my reasonable expenses were paid, I did not save much money from my pay. I corresponded frequently with my friends at Sacketts Harbor and for some time all was smooth. As the summer advanced I began to think it strange that nothing was heard from Washington about my commission, but being as I supposed in a permanent position, I did not give myself much concern about it. I continued quite easy in mind
during the summer. Near the end of October my hopes were most unexpectedly dashed in pieces by the receipt of a letter from the President of the Steam Boat Co. notifying me that my agency at the Falls would be suspended during the ensuing winter and I was directed to close my office at once. This came on me like a clap of thunder. What was I now to do? I had not more than $40 in money after paying my debts and the idea of throwing myself back again on the charity of my friends I could not think of and I determined I would not if I starved. I reviewed my past summers improvidence and extravagance with mortification as with proper economy I might have saved two hundred dollars and if I had done so I could returned to Sacketts Harbor and lived some months without asking special favors. I had spent my money among strangers, I now fully resolved I would no longer impose my distresses upon my friends, but strike out for myself somehow. I knew not where to turn my steps and I had no one to whom I was willing to apply for advice. I felt I could no longer burden those who had so long assisted me. For some days I was in a quandary.

I finally concluded that I would again go to Washington and see Gen’l Jackson personally, altho’ [sic] I had not money enough to pay my way there decently, and I knew that when I reached there I should again be thrown among strangers, destitute of the means of purchasing one days victuals. Yet I determined to trust to luck and the future. If I could not get some appointment or employment in Washington I consoled myself that I should be out of the hearing of all my friends and that they would not know of my humiliation. Rather than go back to Sacketts Harbor for destitute I fully made up my mind that I would go to work anywhere as a common laborer.

Before, however, I proceed to relate the particulars of my second journey to Washington, I must stop to relate a circumstance which happened during my stay at Niagara Falls. Some days before the 4th July a number of persons in that neighborhood called a meeting of citizens for the purpose of getting up an Independence dinner irrespective of party. At this period political anti-masonry ran very high and almost all social intercourse among men opposite in politics had ceased. It was thought by some that a dinner of this character might allay a little the existing bitter feelings others thought differently. It was finally agreed that it should go on.

All due preparations were made for a grand Independence dinner upon a large scale and men of all parties were invited to join in and participate upon a common level. The day and dinner came round and near 300 set down to the table. All things appeared smooth and fair until the end of the regular Committee toasts were read, but when the presiding officer, Gen’l P. B. Porter, began his call for volunteer toasts and speeches, it was soon discovered that none but the most offensive kind of anti-Masonic toasts were offered and these were loudly cheered. These toasts, accompanied by little impromptu speeches, were offered without any regard to the feelings or sentiments of those holding contrary opinions. At this stage of the proceedings I foolishly arose and offered a sentiment in accordance with my own feelings and of course in opposition to the sentiments which had preceded [sic] me. Of the whole number at the table I presume three fourths were political anti-Masons, all of whom received my toast with hisses and groans and many left the table. I remained some time longer with a few political friends.
When we finally left the table, Gen’l Whitney, the Hotel proprieter [sic] kindly warned me to keep out of the way as he said trouble was anticipated. In my stubbornness and youthful ignorance I replied that I was a free American citizen, that I had said or done nothing that I was ashamed from or but what I had a perfect right to do, and that I would not hide from any man or set of men. I then walked out in front of the Hotel on the front portico where I found a great crowd of apparently highly excited people. I heard many threats that I should be whipped. Instead of at once retiring inside the Hotel as prudence and common sense should have dictated, I remained. I had only advanced to the last step of the portico, when I was met insultingly and instantly a general fight followed. The consequence was I was soon overpowered and badly beaten, and was also the few political friends who attempted to rescue [sic] me. I was taken to my room insensible with my clothes badly damaged. My political friends afterward rallied a sort of running fight was kept up until sun down. To this day I have always regretted my indiscretion in this instance. First, in offering a foolish toast; and second, in not keeping out of harms way when warned to do so, as I knew what the odds were greatly against me. I was a young enthusiastic mason and had not yet learned that “discretion was the better part of valor.” To be sure I had committed no crime, yet my acts were under all the circumstances unnecessary and uncalled for. It made me a host of enemies, who in the anti-Masonic papers of that day made me out as a sort of Masonic Morgan Murderer. It was this scrape which greatly influenced me in my determination to quit this part of the country when my agency ceased at the Falls. I hated and dispised [sic] a political anti-Mason. It is, however, poor consolation to get whipped, in the support of any party, or argument, when the odds in physical force is against you. It is better in my opinion to be called a coward for the time being than fight under such circumstances when retreat will save you. I did not think so then.

The report of this fight was reported among my friends at Sacketts Harbor and of course greatly to my discredit, which compelled me to write a great many letters of explanation to clear the matter up, all of which annoyed and mortified me. I believe that all who took any interest in me were satisfied that I was wronged. I was resolved and resolute in my determination to cast loose from all my early acquaintences [sic] (how foolish!) sink or swim, and if I failed in getting into some respectable position, they should never hear from me again. I felt that I had too long been a tax on my friends. I feared I might meet with a rebuff by a long dependency, and I meant henceforth to stand alone. Not but that I felt thankful and truly grateful for all the kindness I had received still the question arose at every turn of my thoughts, how shall I ever be able to repay the debt of obligations I am already under? I was again out of employment and nearly destitute of money. I could not ask any further aid and thereby incur further obligations. I had no means of discharging. I packed my trunk, settled my bills, and bid a final adieu [sic] to Northern and Western New York and was soon on my way to another clime, never to meet any of my early friends again. So it has proved for up to this date I have never met any of those with whom my early years was [sic] passed.

I informed no one where I was going or what I intended to do. I did not even write a line to Capt. Ransom, my best and earliest friend. I have since been informed that he
made many inquiries in trying to find me out. I have no doubt but he considered me ungrateful, and in truth I was so in my acts, but not at heart, for above all men he should have been frankly informed of all my intentions and feelings upon all subjects. Had I been a little older and reasoned for one minute I should not this unnecessarily abandoned all my early friends, and especially those who had come to my relief when a poor homeless, ignorant, destitute boy. I never think of my thoughtless conduct on this occasion without regret, for to this day I feel that I owe a debt of gratitude to the officers of the 2nd Regt. of Inf.[sic] that I can never pay. I am sorry that I can only express my gratitude in words. Most of them are dead.

As heretofore remarked I commenced my second journey to Washington without forethought [sic] of the consequences or judgement [sic] of any kind. I had but $40 in money. I went to Buffalo and took a cheap canal line oat to Utica, time being of no consequence. While on this route I concluded to make one more visit to New Berlin, perhaps it might be my last. At Utica I took up the stage and in a few hours I was again under the hospitable roof of Uncle Daniel Scribner, where as heretofore I was welcomed. Here I learned that my brother had removed with his family to Hudson and I was again disappointed in seeing him. I remained at my uncles a week and in company with his son and daughter visited my relations in that county. I left his house with a heavy heart—no one suspected my destitute condition. I kept all to myself. I took the stage to Albany, the steamer thence to New York, and from there on the usual routes on to Baltimore. Here I had but eight dollars left and not knowing which way I should go from Washington, I concluded to leave one of my trunks in the store room of Barnum’s Hotel and save 75 cents expenses in getting to Washington. I got to Washington the middle of November and immediately called on Gen’l Jackson. He received me in his usual kind manner, but more formal than in the spring. He remembered me in a moment. I had deserrment [sic] enough to see at once that a change had taken place in regard to appointment for office.

I stated the object of my visit in as few words as I could and was frankly answered that nothing could be done for me in the commission appointment. Gen’l Jackson said that my recommendation from the Head Quarters of my Regt. Had been received and filed, but that he had determined to make no appointments that would interfere with the Military School at West Point. I then proferred [sic] to go to West Point and through the school, but I was met with objection of being too old—Law and Regulation against me. I now saw that the day had gone by when I had the remotest prospect of getting an appointment in the army. I was not even offered as in the spring any other position. All the replies I received was in a cold polite manner, that at present there were no vacancies. My hopes all fled in a moment. I could not urge, or beg, or say a word. I turned and left the Presidential Mansion with a heavy heart and wandered off on the commons alone to reflect and compose my mind. I knew not which way to turn, where to go, or what to do. I had not money enough left to pay for two days board, I had not a friend or acquaintance in the city to whom I could apply for a meals victuals, and no money left to carry me away from Washington. I said to myself over and over again, what shall I do? I returned to my room, I pondered over my folly, was sometimes tempted to throw myself into the Potomac, moaned to myself over what I considered my hard fate,
passed in review the thousands of happy faces I saw in the streets and considered myself the most unhappy mortal in the whole world.

The nearest military post where I could enlist was Fort Monroe, VA, the fare to which place on the steamer was four dollars. I at once determined to get to that fort if I could. I went to the Captain of the steamer and candidly told him my situation and my intentions. He questioned me a little. I placed my recommendations in his hands and frankly answered all his questions. Still he seemed to doubt, and replied that there were so many dishonest men traveling about the country, that he knew not who to believe. I then proferred [sic] to open my trunk and let him take what he pleased and retain until I could pay him, which I promised to do from the first money I received after enlisting. And as his boat stopped at the wharf of the Fort on every trip he could learn all about me. He told me to come on board, that I might go. I returned to my lodgings, paid my bills, shouldered my trunk and went to board the boat 12 hours before her time of starting. I had 42 cts [sic] left in my pocket. I had a good deal of talk with the Captain and I relieved my mind in telling him my whole history, with which he seemed interested. He said he liked honesty, that he believed what I told him, and that I should go to Old Point in the cabin free from any charge, as it always gave him pleasure to assist an honest man. He truly kept his word, and treated me with the same consideration he did the other passengers, and a few weeks after when I offered him the money for my passage, he refused to take it. I regret that I have forgotten this mans name and residence, he was so kind and considerate to me.

I landed at Old Point Comfort, and altho’ [sic] I only had 42 cts. [sic] in my pocket, I went to a Hotel, trusting to luck to raise money by enlisting to pay my bill. I did not doubt but that with my recommendations I should readily be enlisted in some grade above a private soldier.

I dressed very neatly, put on a cheerful countenance and walked leisurely into Fort Monroe. I strolled about the Fort an hour or so, and made enquiries of persons I met about the officers, their names, residences etc. in this way I learned that Major R. M. Kirby, then commanding company G. 1st Regt. U.S. Artillery at this Fort, was the brother of Paymaster E. Kirby, to whom I had been long known, and from whom I had a letter of recommendation.

I at once called on Major Kirby, introduced myself and handed him his brothers letter. It acted on him like a charm. He said off hand that I was the very man he wanted for his Orderly Sergeant, that he had long been looking to find an efficient man, that he would do anything in his power to make me contented, and that if I would join his company and was afterwards dissatisfied he would procure my discharge at any time I might want it. This was all and more than I expected, but I replied that I would think the matter over and see him again. I had not yet told him that I desired to enlist, which gave me the opportunity of appearing indifferent and independent. I returned to my Hotel much relieved in mind- my hopes brightened, as I imagined I could see dawning upon me success in the future. I had hardly been at my Hotel an hour before I was followed by Major Kirby, who came to say that he had seen Colonel House, the commanding officer,
and that if I would consent to join his company, my enlistment should date back to the 1\textsuperscript{st} Nov. & I would draw pay from that date. He manifested so much anxiety to get a pledge from me to join his company, that after talking the matter over, I finally consented, and he left me satisfied and told me to take my time.

The next day I was formally enlisted and duly appointed the Orderly Sergeant of Company “G.” 1\textsuperscript{st} Regt. U.S. Artillery, R. M. Kirby commander, and immediately set about preparing my uniform. With the $6 bounty money then paid in advance I settled my Hotel bill and took up my quarters in the Fort specially assigned for my use.

I was now informed that I had to deal with the most unruly set of men among the whole Eleven Companies composing the command at Fort Monroe and was cautioned that I might meet with trouble. I did not find a single individual at the Fort I had ever known or seen before. Major Kirby told me to do my duty, that he would sustain me against all opposition, and that he wanted a complete reformation made in the character of his men. The major admitted that he had a bad profligate set of men, but thought I might find some among them who might be trusted and made useful. At this period Fort Monroe was incomplete, the soldiers quarters were in mere sheds outside the ditch, and many of the officers families lived in little one story huts. The water was bad- none in the fort- all had to be brought in barrels by contract from Hampton, a distance of three miles, and it was always dirty and slimy, and only dealt out in small quantities. We were compelled to wash and do most of our cooking with salt-sea water.

Several hundred negroes were imployed [sic] in wheeling marsh mud onto the covered ways and parapets of the Fort. These negroes, the Eleven Companies of soldiers, with officers and families made a dense population of the most mixed characters, and altho’ [sic] I was somewhat isolated from all except my own bad company of soldiers, I soon began to feel a good deal dissatisfied.

After about a week I commenced duty. I assembled the men and called the roll. I made them a short speech pointing out to of them in plain kind language how I should try to do my duty and what I expected of them in return. Afterwards I went through their quarters and found that almost every mans bunk and chest was a whiskey despository [sic], and that many of the men were then drunk and quarreling. This I resoled should be at once put an end to. I assembled the men again and in as mild persuasive manner as I could, told them of the impropriety of allowing such a state of unsoldierly [sic] conduct to continue, and warned them it must be stopped. I related what I had said and done to Maj. Kirby of which he highly approved. During that evening many of the men were drunk and threats were made against me. I concluded to be calm and not notice any thing this first day and night of my charge, as I was in hopes that the next day many of them would think better of my intentions towards them. There were two Sergeants and four corporals in the Company whose duty it was to assist me in keeping order but I soon discovered that they kept aloof and indirectly encouraged insubordination & drunkenness.
The first man who came forward to proffer his assistance was named Henry G. Cutler. He informed me that more than half the men in the company had agreed to disregard my authority and drive me away, and cautioned me not to expose myself. The next day at dress parade many of them were intoxicated. While dressing the company to the right preparatory to marching on parade one man near the centre of the company persisted in throwing himself forward and back in such a manner as to prevent me lining the company. I at once saw that the crisis had come to rigidly exercise my authority and I deliberately walked down the front and ordered the man to the rear. I had hardly uttered the words before he brought his gun to a charge but I had my eye upon him and did not give him time to get his gun low enough to reach me. I spring towards him instantly and struck him down with the breech of my gun at the same moment giving the command, right face, march, and threatening to run the first man through who should disobey.

The order was obeyed with some low murmuring and I marched them on parade. The wounded man was picked up and carried to the guard house not far distant pretty badly hurt and a Doctor sent for to dress his head.

As soon as I returned from parade I sent for the guard and put every non-commissioned officer and a dozen of the men in confinement. I then walked into the company quarters and broke every jug and bottle I could find, returned to my room and wrote out detailed charges against the ringleaders, returned again to the company quarters, assembled all the men who were not confined in the guard house, and informed them what I had done, and what I should do in the future.

The next day a Court Martial was assembled, all against whom I had preferred charges were tried. The non-commissioned officers were reduced to the ranks and the private punished by stoppage of pay and imprisonment. The Court also passed a resolution justifying my proceedings and lauding my conduct, which was published in general orders on general parade of all the companies. This was a clincher for these unruly men and the means also of bringing over to my support all the timid and well disposed men of the Company, many of whom had no before dared to speak their sentiments. I picked from these men a new set of non-commissioned officers. The first among the number selected was Cutler, who proved to be an intelligent, faithful & useful man, and when afterwards I quit the Company he succeeded me as its orderly sergeant. And here I will mention that Cutler served out his time, speculated, amassed a handsome fortune in a few years, and is now a retired gentlemen residing in the neighborhood of Newbern, N.C. This ended my troubles with the men so far as obedience to my authority was concerned.

In a few days after these events I was taken with violent pains in my head and back and was carried to the hospital with a high fever nearly insensible. I suffered greatly for ten days and had given up all hopes of recovery. The fever at last expended itself leaving me very weak but I rallied and began to recover rapidly. My appetite returned and made me raving for food. The though of beef steak so excited my desires that I procured a piece without the knowledge of my physician of which I eat too much, the consequence was a relapse of my fever and ultimately a long lingering chronic
dissentery [sic] which lasted me ‘til the following April and from which I suffered very much. Just before I was taken sick I had written to Baltimore for my trunk left at Barnum’s Hotel when I went to Wash[ington]. It was put on board a Norfolk steam Boat and left at Old Point for me when I was the sickest. Not being able to set up I did not examine my trunk for some weeks after its arrival. When I did so, to my astonishment I found I had nothing but an empty trunk. In this trunk I had packed all my best and most expensive clothing and such as I most cherished. I had always prided myself in dressing well and had expended a great part of my earnings during the past three years in expensive clothing. This loss almost broke my heart. Major Kirby sympathized with me, wrote to Baltimore, and instituted all manner of energies, but all without the least trace of where, when or how the robbery had been effected. I have always supposed it was done either at the Barnum’s Hotel or on board the steamer.

When spring came I was still sick and the Doctor who attended me recommended that I should go north. I had never written to any of my old 2nd Infantry friends since I left Niagara Falls. But during the winter while I was sick Major Kirby in corresponding with his brother Paymaster Kirby had incidentally mentioned my name, and he in turn meeting some of my old 2nd Infy officers, informed them that I was sick at Fort Monroe and likely to die.

I soon after received letters from Capt. Ransom and Adjutant Clitz tendering me their sympathy, friendship and assistance. They found some fault with me for going away from my friends. They also intimated to me that if I would take a clerkship in the Quarter Masters Dept. in a civil capacity I could get such a position with Capt. John Bradly, who had been ordered to New London, Conn. To erect soldiers barracks.

I handed these letters to Majro Kirby who at once said I had better go, and that I should have my discharge for that purpose. I then wrote to Ransome and Clitz expressing my gratitude for their continued friendship and also to Capt. Bradly that I should like a clerkship under him—all of which letters were satisfactorily answered in a few days.

Towards the last of March Major Kirby went up to Washington and retuned with my discharge. I had been gaining strength slowly for some time. I bid adieu to Fort Monroe, went to Norfolk and took passage in a sailing packet for New York. Owing ot a long easterly blow we had a long passage of nineteen days—tho ten of these days we lay at anchor in Hampton Roads and Cape May. The length of this passage was a great benefit to my health. I rapidly improved in strength and when I arrived in New York I felt almost well. The only remaining relic of my late sickness being a swelling of my legs when I walked too much. I took the steam Boat to New Haven and from thence by stage to New London where I arrived on 14th of April 1830.

I was now once more a free citizen, with (as supposed) a prospect of respectable, permanent and agreeable employment, tho as yet I did not know what would be my pay. After resting a day I reported in person to Capt. Bradly and was most cordially received and congratulated on my recovery from sickness and my safe arrival in New London. I was then informed that my pay would be only $25 a month, that sum being all the
government allowed, but in consideration of the cheapness of living I could get along very well. Board being but $2 a week, it would leave me about $16 for clothing and extras. I at once entered upon the duties of my clerkship.

Capt. Bradly had been detailed by the War Dept. to take charge of the erection of quarters and barracks at Fort Trumbull, in New London Harbor, and it was to assist him in these duties that he had obtained authority to employ me. He had hired an office about equidistant between the City and the Fort. In the same building lived a family named Turner with whom I boarded. Our office being the front lower room. My duties were to keep the office books, visit the Fort once a day to register the time of the mechanics and laborer employed and to make purchases and pay bills in the City under orders of Capt. Bradly. These duties were numerous but not laborious and the employed the most of my time. Capt. Bradly was sickly and done but little himself & and the more devolved on me.

All things with me now appeared prosperous and I was contented and happy. I did not look ahead a single day or think anything about the possibility of again being thrown out of employment.

I made many agreeable acquaintance[sic] in and around New London—one especially I name, Anson Smith. From him I received many favors and I have ever cherished him as one of my most valued friends. Smith now (1849) resides in Cleveland, Ohio, and from all accounts is a wealth man. If not I am sorry. I have not seen him in 12 or 13 years, although I often hear from him.

In the month of July I met my brother John F. for the first time since my remembrance[sic], by appointment in Norwich. He was just out of his apprenticeship with his Uncle Curial Webber who resided in Pomphret, about 40 miles distant. No one who ever had the experience can form any idea of the pleasure I experienced in meeting a brother, both of us men grown, for the first time. We had not only never met, never corresponded, but we had rarely ever heard of each other since our infancy. I opened the correspondence which led to this meeting soon after my arrival in New London. He accompanied me home and remained with me a week. I found him a fine looking young man, well grown, excellent moral character, and I felt proud of his company. We faithfully compared our brief histories and found them as unlike as it is possible to imagine. Mine had been as these pages shew of the most checkered character, while his had been uniform, pleasing and prosperous. He had from infancy been provided with a good home and kind friends, had been instructed in a good trade (that of a coachmaker), well-clothed, and now a little money to start him in business. I on the other hand had experienced all sorts of hardships, and had buffeted my way thus far under most adverse circumstances, never having had the advice or sympathy of any of my relatives since my grandmother’s death. His had been a life of peace and quiet pleasure, mine of confusion with sorrow and pleasure mixed.

I was perhaps a little better informed than my brother on most subjects, as from necessity I had seen a little more of the world, but all this only tended to make me the more unhappy when reviewing the past. I felt that my lot had been a hard one, as
compared with his, and undeservedly so, tho I was of course thankful for my success so far.

We spent a pleasant week together and I agreed to return his visit next month. Accordingly about the middle of August I hired a horse and wagon and went to Pomphret. On my route I stopped one night in Mansfield. The next day I was at my uncle’s and the home of my brother. I had never seen any of my uncle’s family. None of them seemed much like relations. They were kind enough but I could not feel at home. My brother was in good spirits. I remained with him three days and returned to New London. I have never seen him since but once and that was very shortly after. He unexpectedly called one me and said he was on his way to Duanesburgh to visit our mother. He further said he was undecided what he should do, and could not then say whether he should settle in Connecticut or got to some western state. I have never seen him since. When I next heard from him he was in Marion County, Ohio, where he got married. From thence he removed to Lineous Linn County, Missouri.

The most critical period of my life was now approaching, as it should be to all reflecting young men, when the make up their minds to take upon themselves the additional cares and responsibilities of a family. The history of the whole human family shews that it is a step which very materially influences all men during the remainder of their lives, and makes them either more happy and contented or plunges them into a life of sorrow, misery, poverty, and unhappiness. Unfortunately few young men or young women reflect sufficiently upon so important a change in life as that of getting married must necessarily produce, neither do they carefully examine into each others characters to ascertain whether their habits, thoughts and dispositions are souited [sic] to each othes mutual happiness. With a little reflection much after-life misery and degradation would be avoided among all classes and conditions of mankind, as experience and observation every day points out.

The after consequences of hast in matrimonial alliances in every part of the world are daily demonstrated by the thousands who live unhappily in each others [sic] society or separate [sic] after years of wrangling and dissipation. It is not my purpose however to enter into a long train of moral reason on marriage. Very few young at m time of life, at this time exercise much reason or reflection. It is certain that I did not, especially upon the subject of matrimony. Yet all turned out well.

During this summer an intimacy had grown up between myself and a young lady named Lucretia Lewis, then residing with my friend Anson Smith. I knew well enough that I was poor and had no means of supporting a family and had no flattering prospects ahead. I also knew that the lady to whom I was paying my addresses was as poor as I was. Still I persisted until it finally resulted in our agreeing to unite our future destinies for weal or wo, during the balance of our lives.

Neither of us had any money or property, nor were we overstocked with even comfortable clothing. We were both truly and undeniably poor. But the die was cast, and sink or swim, we agreed to enter upon the matrimonial sea, without experience,
rudder or compass to guide us, or a single days stores laid in to keep us from starving. We had however health and confidence and trusted to to hoped-for good luck to provide for our wants. Beyond that we neither of us reflected—I felt I could labor and I was satisfied my intended was a hard working economical girl—some difficulty arose about fixing the time as I began to feel a little insecure in my clerkship. The public buildings would be completed in October and I greatly feared I should then again be thrown out of employment. And so it turned out. About the end of Sept. my worst fears were realized. Capt. Bradley received orders from the War Dept. to close up his accounts and dismiss all hands. I was now in a quandary. What should I do? How could I under the circumstances get married? Where should I go? Were questions that perplexed and worried me greatly. However, never tiring of experiments I determined a third time to visit Washington in my poverty and see if I could not obtain public employment somewhere. I did not much care where it was or what it was. This time I made up my mind to accept anything I could obtain, so that it promised me and my intended wife a living. I had barely money enough to carry me to Washington, when I should again be destitute as at my last visit, but I felt that I had no alternative, I must venture something.

I did not feel that I could live in New London, and my pride revolted at letting anyone know how poor and destitute I really was. I therefore once more launched myself upon a world of uncertainty, with only a faint hope to sustain me that I might obtain something. I had no idea what to do. I was however honest and promised a speedy [sic] return, yet I knew it might possibly be out of my power. I was much troubled for if I failed in getting employment my plighted faith to my intended must be from necessity be indefinitely postponed. I reasoned with myself that if I failed I would then write all the particulars of my poverty and inability and pledge myself in honor to fulfill my promise as soon as I could. I speedily [sic] closed up Capt. Bradley’s accounts, bid my friends, and especially Lucretia, goodbye with many regrets and misgivings, and started for Washington. As soon as I arrived there I called on the Secretary of War to solicit some employment and by him was referred to Adjutant General Roger Jones to make enquiries if he knew of any situation where my services were needed or could be employed. I call on Genl. Jones forthwith and made my business known, and with the multiplication of few words he informed me that if I would accept it he would procure me the appointment of Sutler to Fort Sullivan, Eastport, Me. I returned him my thanks with an overflowing heart. Notwithstanding I did not know how I could conduct the business without either money or credit. I had not even money enough to carry me back to New London and how was I to get to Eastport. Then again I should need friends and credit to get a supply of goods; besides I knew nothing about a trading business or the value of goods. I had never had anything to do with a store and was totally ignorant of of [sic] either buying or selling, but I was determined to make an effort and a bold one. I accepted the appointment, and while I was pondering over in my mind to whom should I now apply for assistance in money, I accidentally and most fortunately met my friend Major Kirby from Fort Monroe, and never was a poor destitute troubled being more rejoiced. I was in luck sure—I told him my situation and prospects. He at once proffered me his name and assistance. I was however modest in my request for money and only asked him for $30 and this he borrowed from Genl. Jesup, and I was told I might pay it over to the Quarter Master at Fort Sullivan when it was convenient. My spirits bounded
with joy. Major Kirby having been stationed at Eastport, he knew all the principal businessmen of the town and to whom he gave me several letters of introduction and which he said would give me all the credit and assistance I needed.

The third day after my arrival in Washington I had completed all my business and started back to New London. My most sanguine hopes had been more than realized and I had a joyous meeting with those whom I had a few days before left with so much uncertainty and so many forebodings of ill luck.

My friend Anson Smith agreed to lend me $200 for four months. I gave my note (the first note I ever had signed) and received the money from which I immediately repaid the $30 I borrowed in Washington, leaving me $170 with which to get married, travel with my wife 400 miles to Eastport and commence business.

On the 1st day of October 1830, on my twenty fourth birthday, I was married at the house of my wife’s mother without either parade or expense. A few of Lucretia’s friends came in, wished us luck and a happy journey through life. Thus was consummated a union under most adverse prospects, without reflection or forthough, in poverty and in debt, and a thousand chances to one that our lot would turn out an unhappy one. The results however as they unfold themselves will show that this union was, to me at least, most fortunate. The next morning after our marriage at sun-rise we started on our journey to Eastport, tow hundred dollars in debt, each of us with but a single small hair trunk containing our scanty supply of clothing, being all the valuables we possessed. Yet with all these disadvantages of poverty as well as uncertainty for I had no idea how I should succeed in my undertaking, I was happy—proving the old adage “that ignorance is bliss.” I felt that I was going to be a free man, that I should find friends, and that I should do well. No other idea crossed my mind and Lucretia’s confidence in me was unbounded. Neither of us knew a person in Eastport and all I had to depend upon was Major Kirby’s letters. Lucretia was but 20 years old, had never mingled with the world, had never been out of her native town, and of course had no idea of what might be her future fate. She, like myself, was ignorant, inexperienced, and uneducated, altho’ circumstances had given me a little the advantage. I do not meanto say that Lucretia had not some education, such as all poor children acquire in Connecticut in the common schools. In this respect she had the advantage of me. She could read and write, and all kinds of house work she understood.

From New London we took the stage to Providence R.I. (at this period no rail roads existed in this region) The weather was quite cold, the roads bad and both of us thinly clad. We did not reach Providence until late in the night. The next day we continued our journey on to Boston, where we fortunately found a packet just ready to sail for Eastport. We immediately embarked, set sail with a fair wind, which wafted us into the Harbor of Eastport in 30 hours after leaving Boston, a most unusual quick passage, and making the whole journey of 400 miles in little over three days. Thus far I had been in luck in every movement I had made since my last visit to Washington.
Here perhaps I might (and it may be I ought) stop this narrative and leave the balance for others equally interested with myself, to relate, or not, as they might see fit any thing worthy of note, as from this period down is the present writing, my life in all its phases has been interwoven with that of my wife with whom I have constantly lived, and who has ever been made acquainted with all my acts, and who has known all my thoughts and aspirations; as also with a family of growing up children, some of whom are grown up and who can remember most of the phases of our united lives. I have, however, concluded to continue the narrative, which I doubt not will be corroborated by my wife, and such of my children as are old enough to remember events I may record.

In partially reviewing my past life up to the time of my marriage, I find but little to exalt over, and not much to condemn. Up to this period my life had been spiced with my ups and downs, each in its turn producing happiness and misery in accordance with the suddenness and extent of the changes. Yet considering the very adverse circumstances under which I was thrown, when a mere child, upon my own resources, among strangers & ignorant I have unquestionably succeeded for better in finding friends and assistance than could reasonably have been expected. I have no doubt but that it was my temperance and willingness to work and study that contributed mostly to my success in the earlier period of my life in the army. I mean that portion of it for five years while a soldier in the 2nd Regt. Of Infantry from 1824 to 1829. Still I was most always fortunate in falling in the hands of good men whose interest I studied and whose advice I usually endeavored to follow. It was this, as much as of instinct and as reason, that guided me along safely at that particular time in the life of uninstructed youth, when temperance is most apt to take its deepest hold in the mind. The turn of almost a single thought, wrongly directed, might have led me into a far different course of life, and long since ended in complete destruction of both mental and physical abilities. How thankful I am that it has been otherwise. Honor, honestly, industry and temperance will never fail in the end to carry all who practice them. Whether young, middle aged or old, safely, respectfully and comfortably through life. With these qualifications rigidly adhered to and practiced not one single individual in our free and happy United States, need fear but that a competency of friends will always be found to assist and cheer them on in all their reasonable undertakings. If my children would know, and have a desire to properly appreciate the many difficulties en countered and overcome by me, I trust they will carefully read these pages, and I am sure that if they have the remotest respect for me of for my memory after I am gone, they can, if they will, profit themselves a little, as they have before them a truthful picture of the experience of at least one life preceding theirs faithfully recorded as a guide to them. I have ever felt proud of my humble success this far in life. The more so, because no relative of mine ever gave me any assistance. Whatever of success I have ever met with, was, when far away from relatives among strangers on whom I had no claims, so that I am under no obligations in any point of view to any relative for my education, my success, or, indeed for assistance of any kind since I was ten years old. On the other hand I suffered indignities, cold and hunger when a poor fatherless helpless boy from relatives, far exceeding all I ever suffered in all my wanderings among strangers, and greater than I have ever witnessed in any part of our common country. But I am proud to say that from my own unaided energy and perseverance I released myself from bondage and struck out for myself. I do not of course
condemn all my relatives indiscriminately, as I have reason to believe that most of them are good people and few of them knew any thing about my boyhood or the treatment I received. I here simply add that I have never asked or received any assistance or special favors from any relative, tho’ I have granted many of them within the past twenty years.

In continuation of this narrative, I shall as heretofore, endeavor to study brevity; confining myself to the relation of only the most prominent incidents in the united lives of myself, wife, and children- all of which are fully known to my wife, and many to my older children, as well as to hundreds of others in no way related, in the places of our residence. Neither my life or acts are matters of secrecy. Every thing with me has been open and above board. At some future day I may revise and correct these rough notes- this narrative is roughly written and hastily thrown together from memory alone and I am aware is composed in bad English, bad grammar [sic] and bad orthography- I have paid no attention to diction, style or ornament, my only object being to roughly scrape together facts for reference at some future day, should time and inclination induce me to re-view and re-write the whole or any part, and winnow out the chaff which is intersperced [sic] over every page. Should I not take this trouble, as I probably shall not, it will be left for any one of my children who might feel so disposed, to use them judiciously for their benefit, instruction or amusement. I do not doubt but some one of my descendents will cherish the possession of these notes, if they are preserved in the family, at some future day. Distance of time, remoteness of events, related in manuscript, always add to their value, as records of the past generation. In this view I hope some one of my children into whose keeping this narrative may fall will preserve it and hand it over to his descendents.

Immediately on our arrival at Eastport I waited on the Commanding Officer of Fort Sullivan, Captain Tho. Childs, with my appointment as Sutler, and was told that in a few days I should be installed into my rightful position. In the meantime I presented my the letters [sic] given to me by Major Kirby, and which I soon found placed me upon a propper [sic] footing with all whom I called. I was offered all the credit I needed as well as any other assistance I required in the way of business facilities. We settled ourselves down in a permanent boarding house with a widow lady named Mrs. Thayer, near the Fort. We was furnished with a comfortable front room in the second story, and paid $28 per month for board and accommodations. In the course of a week we were settled and I opened my Sutlers Store in the Fort and every thing commenced as prosperous as I could wish. I had a good run of business and easy duty—my store only being kept open from 9 to 1 o’clock daily. In a short time I was also employed to make up the Department returns of the Commissary of the Fort at $15 per month, which did not occupy more than an hour or two a day and did not interfere with my Sutlers duties. I should now have saved some money, but I did not. I had too much leisure time and made too many acquaintances with whom I was flattered by being called a clever fellow. I was fond of company as well as dress, and altho’ my income supplied me all my wants and those of my wife, yet my past
experience should have admonished me to live economical and save something to provide against sickness and misfortune. This I never thought of. I did not think it necessary to look ahead, indeed it did not occur to me but that I should always have enough. I enjoyed all the amusements usual in that section of country, paid my way as I went along, saved nothing and passed among my associates as a free hearted social companion. **What a fool I was!** I refunded the $200 I borrowed from my friend Anson Smith in due time.

Our room at Mrs. Thayer’s was handsomely furnished. Our wardrobes were completely replenished. We appeared well—asked no special favors—found plenty of pretended as well as real friends, and upon the whole spent a pleasant and happy winter.

In the spring of 1831, about the middle of April, Lucretia returned to New London to visit her mother, but more especially to be confined, so that she might have the benefit of her mother’s advice and assistance, while at the same time it would be assisting her mother in compensation.

On the 7th July, 1831, our first heir was born---being a girl she was named Frances after my wife’s only sister. As soon as I was informed of the event, I also went to New London, expecting or at least hoping, to find my wife sufficiently recovered to return with me to Eastport. But I was disappointed. I found her in a bad condition, suffering with ulcerated breasts and much reduced in flesh. I was in consequence compelled to return to Eastport without her. She remained at her mother’s until late in the summer. When sufficiently recovered she returned accompanied by her sister Frances. Owing to her long sickness she was compelled to bring up our infant by hand—a troublesome job.

During this summer I purchased a house and lot near the main entrance gate of the Fort for a residence, which in the end turned out a bad speculation. It cost me too much to fix up and furnish. I was living cheaply and happily at Mrs. Thayer’s and should not have gone to housekeeping. In addition to this extra expense, I went on with another large and foolish expenditure, in the erection of a building for a store, which I filled with goods, running myself deeply in debt and increasing my labors and anxieties without very materially increasing my trade or profits. When my wife, child and her sister came from New London I had our house furnished and prepared for their reception, more than doubling my expenses.

Things were, however, going along smoothly when unfortunately in February the store took fire and burned down with most of its contents. I had quite fortunately an insurance on the property which saved me from ruin, tho’ I lost heavily.

This ended my attempts at speculation in Eastport, in anything outside of my legitimate business.

Soon after the burning of my store, the affianced lover of our sister Frances, a young man named Les Harris, came to see us. He had just returned from a whaling voyage. In a few days they returned to New London and were married.
When spring opened (1832) we broke up house keeping and went back to Mrs. Thayers and soon after Lucretia made another visit to New London. During the summer I also started for New London, via New York, partly on business and partly on pleasure. I took passage on a brig loaded with plaster and bound from Eastport to New York direct. We set sail with four cabin passengers, and fair wind. The first two days at sea we got on finely. On the third day the wind changed and blew very hard--the weather clowdy [sic] and lowering. All at once about 10 o’clock at night a sudden squall carried away our main mast with a tremendous crash, the seas running very high, the night pitch dark, and the brig being heavily loaded, became at once unmanageable and swung round broad side into the trough of the sea—each swell rolling over the decks. It was a fearful moment, and to add still more to it, no one knew or could imagine the extent of damage to the vessel. All hands, passengers and all were summoned to assist; the passengers manned the pumps, and the sailors set to work cutting loose from the broken spars and rigging. It was one time supposed that we had no chance for our lives, but by dint of hard work all nights in getting clear of the fragments of mast and spars, pumping our water, and throwing overboard plaster, she was much lightened and rode the seas easier, and when day-light appeared our hopes revived. The extent of damage was then ascertained and partially repaired. A sail was rigged on the remaining mast and the brig got round before the wind. Towards noon the weather cleared up, the wind changed coast-wise, and the following morning we made Cape Anne lighthouse. We were discovered, a Revenue Cutter came to our relief, and in a few hours we were all safely landed on a Wharf in Portland and glad I was to find myself safely on land. I took the first stage for Boston and from thence to New London, where I arrived in due time and found all well.

I now determined to take a short pleasure trip. Lucretia and myself went to New York and from thence up the Hudson to Albany and Troy. Returning by the same route. While we were in New York stopping at the Americal Hotel, the first intelligence of the appearance of the cholera at Plattsburgh was received the alarm was very great. However, we let New York on our return before it broke out in the city. We left our child Frances with her grandmother in New London and started for Eastport.

In Boston we were detained some days waiting for the sailing of a packet, but spent the time pleasantly at the Old Exchange Hotel. We got safely back to our quarters at Mrs. Thayers about the middle of July. During my absence, the clerk I left in charge of my business had by some mismanagement incurred the displeasure of the Commanding Officer and I found my store closed up by his orders. No great harm followed, as an explanation from me set all things right again. I continued my business quietly and pleasantly during the balance of this year and the ensuing winter. On the 25th October 1832, Lucretia gave birth to our second child, a boy, and he was named Joel W. Jones. Jun. Unfortunately he only lived a few days, dying [sic] on the 5th Nov. I was temporarily absent in Boston on business both at the time of birth and death of this child.

In the month of March 1833, the Agent of the Pembroke iron works, located 12 miles from Eastport, proposed to me that I should purchase a large building in an unfinished state located on the grounds of the Iron Works, and open a Hotel and store. He
held out to me most the flattering inducements and represented that I could in a few years make a fortune. It was then thought that Pembroke would soon become a large manufacturing town, and there being no Hotel, I could not fail; besides, I would have more than an equal chance of success in the store as I would have the favor of the Iron Works Co. I visited Pembroke and concluded if I could make a satisfactory arrangement I would abandon my present business and go there. Pembroke was fast growing—the Iron Works Co. and Salt Works Co. had at this time over 300 mechanics and laborers employed, there was also a saw mill, and these, with the residents of the village, and the prospect of numerous visitors, I thought a fine opening for the purpose business.

The main difficulty I had to encounter was the lack of funds to enable me to finish the building, purchase the furniture, and a stock of goods. Such an undertaking without means and all on credit was a hazardous undertaking, but as my credit was good in Eastport, Boston and Portland I concluded enter into the speculation. A most unfortunate one it turned out in the end. However, with my usual lack of forethought and knowledge I went on with it. I bargained for the building and grounds for $5000 payable $500 a year and accruing interest. I resigned my Sutlers position and set to work with my new undertaking. I made no calculation and had no idea of the expense I should incur in finishing up the building and furnishing it for a Hotel. While I was engaged at this work Lucretia took the opportunity of visiting her mother in New London. She returned the 1st of April with our daughter Frances. I commenced work on the house early in March. It cost me near $1000 to finish it up—Furniture cost $2500—Then I built a barn and stable $500---Horses and carriages for the same $1500. I fitted up a store in the basement and the first stock of goods invoiced $3000. This was all done in about six weeks and I was in debt near $9000 besides the purchase of the lot and building $5000. And this money I owed Pembroke, Eastport, Boston and Portland. This was a great load of debt for a young inexperienced man like me to shoulder. But I had health, ambition, energy and confidence, and so had Lucretia who encouraged me in my hopes. I started off with a fine run of custom in both the Hotel and the store. My friends were many so far as professions went and some of them promised to back me up. The hotel I called “The Pembroke House” of which I personally took charge assisted in all things by Lucretia. In the store I employed an excellent man named Whiting, to whom I paid $25 a month and found him. I devoted all my time as did my wife to business. We labored very hard. Everything went on prosperously during the summer, my profits averaging $60 a day. I met my engagements promptly and I really felt that I was on the road to a sure and speedy fortune as did also most of my friends.

The hotel was well patronized and my store trade from the Iron Works men was all I could expect. The Iron and Salt companies paid their men regularly in cash or drafts on Boston. I always had money on hand to meet my liabilities as they fell due, and I began to think myself a man of consequence.

When the fall came round the companies began to be lax in paying their men and their bills, and I began to feel the need of more money. Many unpleasant reports began to circulate about the Iron Works Co.—still I did not doubt their ability to ultimately pay their bills and prosperously continue their business. I continued on increasing my
liabilities for the purchase of goods and running them off on credit, and the full faith that the Iron and Salt Companies would pay up their indebtedness. I occasionally had some uneasiness and had frequent conversations with the agent of the Iron Works Co. on the subject. H was a smooth tongued man and always assured me that all should come out right and be to my advantage in the end. January 1834 came round and all at once when I least expected, having so recently been assured of the perfect solveny [sic] of the Iron Works intelligence came that both the Iron and Salt Co. had failed. Their principal office was located in Eastport. This was closed on Saturday night the 14\textsuperscript{th} Jan 1834. And on the ensuing Monday morning the Iron and Salt works did not open and 500 men many of them with families, were turned adrift.

I was almost paralyzed and at first knew not what to do or how to act. Scarcely a man employed in the Iron Works but owed me from $5 to $100—all of whom were suddenly deprived of the means of support and paying their debts. As soon as I had reasoned the matter over a little I saw at once that I had no alternative left me in this crisis but to make an assignment of my goods, furniture, and debts due me, for the benefit of my creditors and throw myself upon their mercy to justify me or not as they pleased. I not only felt bad and discouraged but my pride was also humbled. My grand hopes of success were gone. But, Lucretia my never failing prop in distress said never mind we will yet rise above want.

I sent for a Lawyer and had all my affairs investigated and legally and properly arranged for the benefit of my creditors without any special favors to any one of them. Thus all my fancied hopes of a speedy fortune fell through—I was a failed man,—all my labors lost—again thrown out of business, and owing to my great outlay during the past years on the property purchased, and my losses in bad debts in consequence of the failure of the Iron Works Co. on whom on whom [sic] I mainly depended, it was impossible for me to raise myself again for a long time to come. The failures of these Companies spread desolation all round, as they were indebted to most all classes of people in some form—merchants, mechanics and laborers suffered the worst.

I officially notified my creditors what I had done and of all the circumstances which had forced me into making an assignment. After a few days a meeting of my principal creditors was held at my house. They fully examined my affairs an approved of my proceedings; but in place of releasing me and allowing the assignees to go on with the settlements, they unanimously requested me to remain and do it all myself, and at the same time binding themselves to accept any prorated amount I could pay, and give me a full discharge. This offer was so flattering a mark of confidence in my honesty that I could not well refuse, tho I knew I should waste six months of my time and get nothing for it. I at once entered upon the duties of settlement retaining Mr. Whiting to assist me in the undertaking.

On the 3\textsuperscript{rd} of May 1834, our third child was born, a boy, who we named Enos, after my grandfather. As soon as Lucretia was able to travel we broke up our house and she returned to her mother in New London with our children, there to wait the turn of events. I continued most seriously [?] engaged in settling my affairs until about the 8\textsuperscript{th}
July, by which time I had disposed of all the property and had collected many debts, and had paid my creditors all round 75 cents on the dollar. I now felt that I had sacrificed enough of my time and turned over my affairs to Mr. Whiting with instructions to collect in and pay over what he could. I now began to cast about to see what I could do for a living. I was completely flat. The past years labors had been hard on both myself and wife and had turned out disastrous [sic]. I was now much worse off than I was the year before for then I had a position which insured me a living, and easy and pleasant life, my credit was good, and I had no enemies. Now everything was reversed. I was out of business, had no credit and no money, I could find no prospect about Pembroke or Eastport, and I determined [to] quit that part of the country and try my luck in some other place. I finally bid adieu to the state of Maine and its inhabitants. I left behind me many friends whose friendship I have retained to this day.

As this closes another chapter in the drama of my checkered life I propose to make or rather take a brief review of some of my acts while a resident in the eastern part of Maine. After the lapse of 15 years in looking back to that period I find many things to regret. I had difficulties that could and should have been avoided. I lacked discretion. As had too often been the case with me I was influenced too easily by designing men. My pride and temper were neither under proper control—these on several occasions brought me in difficulties and made me enemies, which a little reflection would enabled me to avoid. However like the many young men of my age who have not been properly trained I thought differently and consequently in the end became the principal sufferer.

At Pembroke I was surrounded by a mixed population from all parts of the world and representing all sorts of characters. In my transactions with these people (and they were numerous) I enforced my points with an unnecessary strong arm, the consequence was when I fell through, I lost the sympathy of all these people and of course more debts due me than I otherwise should. I was not a man of policy. I will relate one circumstance, as it was a rather prominent one in my career, which happened, and which although justified in law, it would have been far better for me to have avoided, and which I could have easily done by an appeal to the law, instead of taking the law in my own hands.

A man named Curtis, a workman in the Iron Works, while on a drunken frolic took it into his head one night about 11 o’clock to break in the door of my store, just after Mr. Whiting had closed it up. When, soon after, I was informed of the circumstances instead of sending for an officer & having him arrested I at once resolved to clear him out of the store at all hazards. I repaired to the store, against the urgent remonstrances of my wife and Mr. Whiting, and finding Curtis in possession and the front door broken from its hinges, I was raving mad. I ordered him out—he refused to go, used insulting language and dared me to attempt to put him out.

I instantly and from a natural impulse of the moment, seized two iron weights, the first I threw at him, struck him in the breast, the second one (a four pound weight) struck him in the head, knocking him senseless to the floor. At first it was supposed he was killed outright—he did not return to consciousness for 24 hours and it was uncertain for
some days whether he would recover. The force of the blow broke his cheek bone and nose, leaving him badly disfigured.

This transaction raised up against me a host of enemies among the roughs and many good citizens condemned me for taking the law into my own hands. The parties went before two grand juries to endeavor to get me indicted but failed, both juries considering me justified under the circumstances.

This Curtis was a reputed bad man and noted for his pugilistic accomplishments, and I have no doubt had he got hold of me before I knocked him down he would have seriously injured me. But my error was in going near him. A full account of this affair was published at the time. I had several other difficulties, all of which tended to make me enemies, tho none so bad as this one with Curtis. The Agent of the Iron Works (Foster) was a smooth tongued hypocrite and first and last made me a great deal of trouble. My great misfortune was my unregulated temper. When I thought myself right I could not brook opposition or contradiction, without giving away to excitement, and having transactions with so many people of such varied character, as guests & traders, my difficulties were of frequent occurrence. I always felt I was right, but I lacked discretion.

Before I proceed with my narration, I will relate very briefly one of my visionary acts while in the eastern part of Maine, which came near changing my whole course of life, and this foolish enterprise I undertook without consulting my wife, who was at the time in New London. During the time I was engaged in closing up my affairs in Pembroke an intimate young friend named Farnsworth, the son of the Indian Agent of a small tribe of Indians in the neighborhood, proposed to me, with the sanction of his Father, to go to Europe with a party of Indians and exhibit them in the principal cities. I agreed, and all the preliminaries were settled—we were to take out eight Indians, males and females, and as many Indian curiosities as we could collect. We neither of us had much money, but we thought we could raise as much as would land us in London, and then we would trust to luck. The only obstacle we thought of was to obtain the Indians. Four males had offered to go, but we wanted four squaws. We accordingly took the Indian Agent with us and went to Pleasant Point Indian settlement and opened negotiations. After a great deal of bargaining and persuasion [sic] we got the requisite number to consent to go. Our next step was to obtain a vessel to go in. We went to Saint Andrews in N. B. and agreed for our passage to Liverpool, England, for $300, and find ourselves. Then we set about collecting the Indian curiosities and had our arrangements nearly completed to set sail when we found that all our plans had been thwarted with the Indians by the Catholic Priest of the Indian settlement, who had interposed his authority and influence with the Indians to back out from their agreement. Nothing we could offer them would induce them to leave their homes and we were reluctantly compelled to abandon the enterprise. I have no doubt if we had in the first instance applied to the Priest and made him a party or secured him a fee, we should succeeded in getting off. It was perhaps fortunate the enterprise fell through as it was an extremely hazardous undertaking. I was at this period of my life full of visionary schemes and I soon found myself in the position of most young inexperienced men who run after the shadow instead of the substance. I never thought of the consequences.
I left the State of Maine about the middle of July and joined my wife in New London. Now what should I do? Here I found myself with a wife and two children out of business and nearly out of money. I could not make up my mind where to go or what to do. I was completely broke, tho I maintained cheerfulness. I knew I could not consistently stop long in New London with my wife and children without doing something to pay my way and no one really suspected how poor I really was. And my pride under the most impoverished circumstances was always too great to ever permit me to eat a meals victuals at the expense of any relative without paying for it.

Finally I made up my mind to go again to Washington and see what I could find to do. On the 1st of August I started, leaving my family behind. I left with my wife $200 and took with me $80, being all the money I had. I got safely through and took lodgings at Mrs. McPhearsons on F. St. near the Treasury Dept. intending to remain until I could find some employment in some of the Departments. I frequently called on the President, the Secretary of War, and the Adjutant Genl. Of the Army, but I did not receive much encouragement. I was offered a place at the Washington Arsenal, but Having a dislike to the Commanding Officer I did not accept it. This was another one of my unfortunate acts, as I was very glad three [years] after to obtain the same situation.

After remaining in Washington near a month I accidentally met Sergeant Cutler, the same who succeeded me as Orderly Sergeant of Major Kirby’s Company at Fort Monroe in 1830. From him I learned that he was about to quit the same Company and go into business in New Bern, N.C. and that as I had assisted him four years before, he would be glad to assist me to succeed him in my old position. He gave me a flattering account of his success—Major Kirby and his Company were then stationed at Beaufort, N.C. to which place he was then going to return. I did not much like the idea of going back into the line of the Army, still this chance of doing so under my embarrassed circumstances appeared a sort of God send. I according wrote to Major Kirby that I was out of employment, had a wife and two children, and enquired what he could do for me. In a few days I received his answer, giving me full particulars and offering me my old position in his Company, adding that my pay as Orderly Sergeant would be $16 per month, with two rations, full allowance of clothing with good quarters, $30 per month from the Engineer Dept. and $25 per month for the Subsistence Dept. which would give me $71 per month cash. The duties would be light tho it would require all my time; 1st in performing my Orderly Sergeant duty, 2nd I would be required to write up the accounts of the Engineer Dept, and 3rd to take charge of and issue the rations of the Subsistence Dept. to the soldiers. Of course, I accepted the offer with gratitude. But to this time I had used up my money and I wrote to Lucretia to send me $100 out of the $200 I left with her. After waiting a sufficient time for it to come and being impatient to get off, I left orders for my letters to follow me, borrowed $50 in Washington and started to Beaufort, N.C.

It turned out that the $100 was duly mailed in New London as I requested, and that it was stolen somewhere on the route. The money mailed was a $100 bill of the Whaling Bank and the bill came back among their exchanges five months afterward. The loss of this $100 was quite a serious matter at this time.

56
I arrived in Beaufort on the 1st Nov. 1834 and immediately entered upon the duties of my several offices. The Company was then stationed in the Village of Beaufort, but was soon to move to Fort Macon, then early completed, located at the entrance of the harbor, nearly two miles out in front of the town.

The season had now got so far advanced that I concluded to defer sending for my family until Spring and until we had got settled in Fort Macon. The Fort was so far finished that in January 1835, we moved over and took possession. The quarters for officers and soldiers were in the casemates of the Fort. The rooms were rather damp but in other respects quite comfortable. Our communication with Beaufort was by means of row-boats alone. The Fort was located on Bogue Banks and separated from the mainland by a sound of the same name. The banks are simply long narrow sand ridges thrown up by winds and ocean currents, uncomfortable to live on, destitute of fresh water, and very little vegetation, so that Fort Macon was not the most desirable place to live on with a family. The little village of Beaufort is a poor sandy place on the seashore, but we found the inhabitants kind and hospitable. The principal trade of the place is in raw turpentine.

April came round—our sutler was going to New York to purchase goods and with him I made arrangements to bring on my family. I wrote to Lucretia to meet him in New York on a day named. I had not in any of my letters informed her of my employment [sic] or of the place she was coming to. I had many reasons for not doing so, as I knew she would be greatly adverse to living at a military post, and if she knew what a place Fort Macon was that she would leave New London with many regrets, besides, I did not want my friends to know I had gone back into the army. My situation, however, I considered a good one, and I felt sure when she was once more with me that she would feel satisfied to share my life.

The winter had passed over quietly and pleasantly and nothing but the absence of my family marred my enjoyment. Mr. Lindsay, our sutler, left for New York and in due time returned with my family. She met him in New York by appointment, and from thence they came in a sailing vessel to New Bern, and from there 45 miles by stage to Beaufort, at which place we met. She and the children were well, tho greatly fatigued with their long journey. We stopped that night in Beaufort and the next morning rowed over to the Fort and went to my quarters which I had previously prepared for our residence. We occupied three casements. One we used as kitchen, one as dining and living room, and the other as bed room. These were large rooms about 20 x 40 feet under the parapet of the Fort.

I had been separated [sic] from my family nine months. Lucretia, as I expected was greatly disappointed at the place she found herself, but she, with her
happy temperament, made no complaint, and settled down contented, always willing to share with me cheerfully the fortunes of life, whether good or bad.

The following summer passed over pleasantly. I may say happily. We had all we wanted. Everybody was kind and all things appeared fair & prosperous. We enjoyed our leisure in fishing or sailing and the other amusements incident to a seacoast life. Nothing of note transpired to disturb our quiet until the last of January 1836, when all at once we received intelligence of the “Dade Massacre” by the Indians in Florida, and the same mail brought us the sad news that we were ordered to Florida forthwith to assist in quelling the Indian disturbances. We were all taken aback. It was almost a death blow to me and my poor wife. She was on the point of confinement and I should be compelled to leave her alone among strangers. And worse still, I should be far away in a sickly climate, engaged in a dangerous Indian War, with more than an equal chance of dying of disease or being killed. We were not alone in our distress. My friend and commander Major Kirby was in the same predicament with his family. My first impulse was to refuse to go, but better councils prevailed. I was a sworn soldier in the army and could not disobey an order without incurring lasting disgrace. I had another hardship to encounter—my extra pay in the Engineer and Subsistence Depts. Would cease as soon as I left Fort Macon. But we consoled ourselves as well as we could with the idea that the war would soon be ended and that we should return to our present station, and after all it might only turn out a pleasant trip to Florida and back. With these consoling reflections we set about preparing for our families such comforts as we could pick up, supposing we should at least have some days to make preparation, before transportation could be obtained. But we had hardly time to fairly think the matter over before a steamer hove in sight and came at once to our wharf. On board was an officer with an order for us to embark at once. No delay could be tolerated. The steamer made fast to the wharf on the evening of the 2nd Feb. And before 12 o’clock the next day our command was on board and put to sea. We were to call for other troops on the way.

In all my life I never felt more distressed than this parting with my wife and family. Still I bore up against my feelings in the presence of my companions, put on a cheerful countenance and made light of our expedition. This for many reasons both public and private I felt it my duty to do.

The very day I left on this (to me) unfortunate campaign, my wife was confined, within a few hours of our departure; but considering the disturbed state of her mind she got over her sickness remarkably well. Our child was a girl and at the request of Mrs. Kirby she was named Mary Jane. My wife remained at the Fort, as did also Mrs. Kirby until my return some months afterwards.

I shall now briefly trace my travels during my Florida Campaign, leaving my family at Fort Macon to take care of themselves during my absence.
The next morning after sailing, our steamer ran into Smithville at the mouth of Cape Fear River, where we took on board another company of soldiers. The weather was unusually cold and all of us was in a shivering condition. We were detained but a few hours at Smithville when we put to sea again and on the following morning ran into Charleston, S.C. Here we were detained one day in getting supplies. I spent some hours in strolling about the City of Charleston in company with Major Kirby. I had by this time become somewhat reconciled to my fate and pretty nearly made up my mind that by the time we should reach Florida the Indians would give up and not fight. Putting to sea again we reached Saint Augustine, Florida, on the 9th Feby. Here we found everything in confusion but one company of soldiers had arrived before us. The inhabitants from all the settlements for many miles round had fled from their homes and sought protection and safety in the City of St. Augustine. All sorts of reports and rumors of Indian murders, attacks, burnings, and threatening were hourly circulated. And to add to the fright and confusion of the inhabitants, the night we landed the Indians approached within a few miles of the City and burned all the buildings on Bulow’s plantation.

On landing we were conducted into the old nunnery building, but were only permitted to remain there a couple of hours before we were ordered out, supplied with canvas tents and forced to encamp upon the cold wet ground in the midst of a rain storm, having neither straw or boards to keep us out of the wet. I had not for many years been exposed to anything like this and I suffered greatly from the cold.

Here I think it proper to state for a more correct history of my movements in this Florida Campaign against the Seminole Indians, that I copy mostly from the letters I wrote to my wife which I now have before me. In my letter dated St. Augustine, Feby. 24, 1836, I extract the following account of our first expedition:

“Our command left here the day after the date of my last letter, on an expedition south about 70 miles to visit a place called Smyrna, and to scour the country thereabouts in search of the Indians. We embarked on a small steamer and made our first landing 63 miles down the coast, and from thence proceeded up the Musquito River seven miles, returned, went in another direction up the Sound about twelve miles, all on foot, and stopping in many places. It is a fine beautiful country, interspersed with orange orchards, and groves of lofty Palmetta and live-oak trees, but everything also that industry and civilization has done is utterly destroyed. We visited the site of many dwellings which presented a most desolating scene—many buildings were burned, others partially, and some cut and hacked to pieces. I saw tables, bureaus, sofas, mirrors, pictures, beds, books &c strewed about everywhere, cut and broke in all shapes. The marks of the tomahawk was visible everywhere in the seilings [sic] and walls of unburned houses—not a window or door left unbroken, feather beds emptied and the contents flying about the country—the shores of the river and sound lined with chests and trunks broken open and rifled of their contents. On some plantations
nothing left to tell of the destruction but the naked chimneys and the ashes of the buildings and contents. I cannot in this hasty scrawl fully describe the utter desolation of all this section of country. I was informed that most of the inhabitants of these settlements escaped by flight to St. Augustine, leaving everything they possessed behind them. Men, women, and children, black and white, were driven from their homes destitute of food and almost naked to find their way as best they could, seventy miles along the seacoast to St. Augustine.

We found only two dead bodies who had been shot. We came too late to be of any service, as the Indians has laid waste this whole section of country and retired into the interior before our arrival, so that after a fatiguing march of five days without finding or seeing a single Indian we re-embarked on our steamer and returned to St. Augustine, dirty and half-starved. We are now quartered in tents on the outskirts of the City and sleeping on the bare ground. I expect a few days hence will [see] us again on the march into the interior among the swamps of this miserable country. I learn to day that strong re-enforcements of volunteers are on the way here from Georgia and South Carolina, so that I am in hopes this useless war will soon be ended. Troops are landing here daily. It is reported that the Indians will not fight in a mass—they keep aloof from our soldiers and secrete themselves in the numerous swamps and hiding places far in the interior where they cannot easily be reached.

From the 24th to the 28th we were quiet in camp—the weather was beautiful—St. Augustine all alive. During this time vessels were daily coming in from Savannah and Charleston freighted with men, munitions and provisions for the War. All things now begin to show us that this war may be a long one.

St. Augustine is full of soldiers and all sorts of rioting and drunkenness are indulged in. General Eustis has assumed command and is organizing as best he can the volunteers. They are a hard set. General Scott has also come and given orders for immediate operations against the Indians in the interior. I shall not recapitulate the movements of any of these columns of troops except the one I am attached to, as I do not propose in my letters to go into a history of this war, only so far as I am personally an actor in the scenes under my own observation.”

The next letter from which I make an extract is dated “Williams Plantation, March 8th 1836.” “Our command consisting of two companies of regulars under direction of Major Kirby, left St Augustine on the 1st inst. in the little steamer Dolphin for t his place (the same we visited on our last trip) but did not get here until the 5th owing to a storm, in which we all got through safe, and I need not describe it.

We are encamped on a sandy ridge by day but at night for better security, our two companies only numbering 108 men, we retire into an old sugar mil. Here are to be seen the same destruction I mentioned in my last letter. We work during daylight in fortifying ourselves against any sudden attack; and in
examine the adjacent country, securing and preparing means of transportation, collecting corn &c and at night half of us remain under arms. As far as living is concerned we are in clover, for in our vicinity are acres of sweet potatoes of an excellent quality from which our men dig immense [sic] quantities, but as to bread, just think of flour wet with swamp water and baked in the ashes. Of course it is not very clean, light, or tender, but notwithstanding it relishes well, as do also the vegetables which are here in abundance. You will thus perceive that I am blessed with a good appetite and consequently good health. Severe exercise and a good conscience are great stimulants to digestion. The trees, plants, &c hereabouts look beautiful at this season, but the inhabitants having all been driven off and their buildings destroyed give the country a dismal appearance. Arrow roots grow here in great abundance, it is called “coontie.” The Indians I am told eat it. The palmetto tree here is the most beautiful I have ever seen, and some of the live oaks are monsters in seize [sic]. The orange and lemon grow spontaneously. Fish and fowl are plenty, but we have no time to catch or kill them. How long we shall remain in this neighborhood I cannot tell. It is understood that our next move [sic] will be across [sic] the country through the swamps to Lake George. Beyond I have no idea. I am now of the opinion that this campaign will not end the war. I intend to get out of Florida as soon as I honorably can.”

Postscript to the same letter on the 9th: “Last night about 8 o’clock we were much alarmed. Our sentinels fired their guns and came running in pell mell. We were all night under arms in momentary expectation of an attack, but I suppose that our watchfulness induced the Indians to keep out of the reach of our guns. In the morning no Indians were to be seen. Runners came in with accounts of large numbers of Indians in the neighborhood and their attacks on several detachments of troops.”

The same letter is continued on the 10th: “We were under arms all last night. Our sentinels were fired upon but no harm done, the night very dark. This day the steamer Dolphin arrived from St. Augustine bringing us flaming reports of battles fought, no doubt greatly exaggerated [sic]. So far as we are concerned I feel safe for we are well fortified and could beat off ten times of our number. I am in good health and spirits. The novelty of our position and the excitement and expectation are congenial to my temperament. Three men were killed last night ten miles from here at Tomoka, a volunteer station, but most likely through their own carelessness.”

From the date of the preceding letter I had no opportunity of writing again to my wife until the 6th of April. As anticipated we were not permitted to remain only a few days at Williams Plantation. On the 13th March we were ordered to proceed to the interior. I extract from my journal the main particulars of this march across the peninsula of Florida to near Tampa Bay. This letter is dated “in Camp, 15 miles from Tampa Bay, April 6, 1836.”
“March 13\textsuperscript{th}. This was a fatiguing day. Indians shew themselves at a distance several times. About dark Lieut. Allen, myself, and five men were sent out to examine the adjacent hammocks. On our return to camp after dark, we were mistaken for Indians by our comrades in camp and fired upon, but fortunately none of us were hurt. This carelessness came near a catastrophe. Suring this whole night Indians were in our neighborhood. March 14\textsuperscript{th}. All quiet. Got some rest. March 15. Steamer Dolphin came from St. Augustine bringing Genl. Eustis to see our position. The same day a detachment of 30 sick men joined us from Tomoka. March 16. Steamer left. Genl. Eustis and the sick men taken to St. Augustine. March 17. All quiet. Weather very hot. [March] 18. An Express arrived with orders for us to march into the interior. How far or where no one knows. March 21. Broke up our camp at 9 o’clock and marched all day. No roads. Water most of the time knee deep. Reach Tomoka Creek at sun-down, distance only 10 miles. Men much fatigued. Camped in an open field without shelter. Rained hard all night. I suffered greatly with the tooth ache. Got it out the next morning and felt greatly relieved. March 22. Was joined by company of volunteers, most of them sick with the measles. Marched on towards Volusia on the St. Johns River. Abandoned all our stores except such as we could carry on our backs. Burned provisions and clothing and sunk the powder in the creek, many thousands dollars worth were thus destroyed but we had no means of transportation and it was [better to] destroy than allow them to fall into the hands of the Indians who were following our movements. We had a hard day’s march through mud and water and made only eleven miles. My ankles much swelled. March 24. This day we made but 12 miles in 13 hours constant march. Some of the way the water was almost waist deep. On an Indian trail and directed on our route by a guide. The next day we stretched about 18 miles and reached Volusia on the St. Johns River. Rained hard most of the day. Suffered greatly on the route from wet, fatigue, and this last day from hunger as our provisions gave out. Our ammunition was all spoiled. For miles together the mud and water was knee deep and it was as [much as] a man could do to get through it unencumbered. We were a miserable looking set of men. March 25. We had no tents. Rained in torrents all day. Took up our position in the camp of Genl. Eustis. T our surprise we found here quite an army. 800 mounted men and 400 infantry, which with our battalion, and some 200 teamsters, figured up near 1700 men, making quite a formidable appearance. This was what was designated the left wing of the army operating against the Indians in Florida. This day the Indians made a foolish attack on one of our outposts, killing one and wounding five or our men. They were easily repulsed and our men brought in one dead Indian. It made quite a stir in camp until the extent of the alarm was known. March 26. This whole day occupied in crossing over the St. Johns River. Encamped in military order on the other side before sundown. Each man is served with four days rations and 60 rounds of ammunition. Ten days rations are carried in 34 mule wagons. March 27. Marched only seven miles and encamped. No road. Swamps and hammocks almost impassable. Men have to assist the mules in getting along with the wagons and two pieces of artillery. March 28. Advanced 15 miles travelling much better, mostly an open country. My ankles much swelled. Tore up a shirt to bandage
them. March 29. Advanced eight miles to the Ocklawaha River. Employed the rest of the day and all night in crossing on a floating bridge which our men constructed of trees lathed together. Our advance attacked. Genl. Shelton badly wounded. One Indian killed. This is a beautiful river. March 30. March at daylight without rest. When we had made about eight miles our advance was attacked by a considerable force of Indians and four of our mounted men fell from their horses at the first fire. I was with the main body near half a mile distant but hearing the firing we advanced in double quick time. Coming to the front our battalion charged in a hammock, the Indians retreating through and into a dense scrub-oak underbrush. A half mile beyond this scrub-oak was black cypress swamp into which the Indians retired. This swamp extended for many miles. Our whole force was ordered to charge into this swamp but all attempts to penetrate it was impossible. The Indians absolutely laughed at us and when we retired they jeered at us. Our men were kept in the edge of this swamp for more than an hour. A great deal of firing was done and much hallowing on both sides, but no great damage was done. The Indian bullets mostly whistled through the tree tops 20 and 30 feet over our heads. I was greatly surprised at their random firing. We at length abandoned the swamp and marched on about two miles and encamped for the night. March 31. Marched this day 15 miles, passed through an Indian town called Pilaklikaha, located in a most beautiful open savanna country interspersed with clumps of trees. We burned every house and hovel numbering 30 or 40 and some of them of considerable size. The whole region swarmed with cattle and ponies. Our men killed great numbers of calves, all seemed tame and gentle. Considerable ground had been cultivated and the Indians must have lived a happy life. Not an Indian was to be seen. All had fled at our approach. It was now ascertained that the attack on us yesterday was only made to delay our approach to the place, so they might get off with their women and children. Their ruse was admirably planned and executed. This town is said to be the home of the noted chief Jumper, who planned and executed the massacre of Major Dade’s command. We are now within a few miles of the scene of that tragedy. All of us are now anxious to see the spot where so many brave men perished.

April 1. We laid in camp all day, sent out scout parties in all directions. No Indians about. This was a terrible day for the Indian cattle. They were butchered without mercy and many uselessly. It was a general feast of fresh beef and wastefulness. April 2. Marched sixteen miles, passed the fatal spot where Major Dade and his 108 men of his command were butchered. The ground is still strewn with the remains of their clothing and other effects. Their bodies were buried in two graves by a column of troops under command of Genl. Gaines about three weeks before our arrival. The country is a sandy pine barren and occasional savannas and here we strike the national road across the peninsula of Florida, from this point runs to Tampa Bay on the shore of the Gulph of Mexico. April 3. Marched 14 miles, road good, weather hot, crossed the Withlacoutia [Withlacoochee] River at midday. April 4. Marched 18 miles, road good, weather hot, crossed the Hillsborough River, passed a military post garrisoned by volunteers. April 5. Marched some 8 or 10 miles and encamped. We are now
within 15 miles of Tampa Bay. Here we shall remain some days to recruit our men and clean up, and get a fresh supply of provisions. Our teams all go to Tampa. Genl. Scott is near us with his column of troops numbering 3000, as is also Colonel Linsay with another column of near 1000 men, making nearly 6000 men in this neighborhood and none of them have been enabled to gain a single laurel or get a fight with the Indians of any note. The Indians are no longer embodied. Their women, children, and old people have been sent far south and the fighting men have dispersed themselves in small parties of from 10 to 100 over the country, and follow our columns of soldiers about, keeping themselves out of danger, plundering when opportunity offers a chance, and picking off sentinels and stragglers. We all feel that these 6000 men here concentrated are useless, especially at this time. I cannot tell much about the Indians and I cannot find anyone who can give any reliable information. My opinion is fully made up that they cannot be caught or brought to any terms this season. It appears to me to be a most senseless and useless war. I am sick of the whole concern and if I live to get out of Florida Uncle Sam shall not catch me in such a place again. I have nothing to tell of but hardship & deprivation. The past three weeks has often made me pant for a drink of good water—raw port is sometimes a relish. I have seen 25 cents paid for a small hard biscuit. I do not however complain as I am better off than most of my comrades. I am my own cook and washer woman. The first thing I do after encamping at night is to wash my shirt and stockings. This I feel is for my health and comfort during this hot weather. If I am compelled to stop in these forests another month I shall be naked. I do not allow myself to show a murmur because I see so many around me suffering. Very few in our camp are as comfortable as I am.

I have marched so long in the hot sun and am so worn down with fatigue that I can hardly hold a pen. I need my leisure for rest. I write with great difficulty. I shall not probably have another opportunity of writing until we re-cross the peninsula. I have been very particular in dates for my own satisfaction for further reference x x x x x

Many little incidents have happened during the preceding march that would not doubt be amusing and interesting to relate but which would occupy more time and space than I can well devote to the subject.”

My next letter is date Volusia, April 26th, 1836 x x x x “We lay at camp Shelton 15 miles from Tampa Bay from the 6th until the 13th inst. When we broke up camp and marched four miles towards Tampa Bay. April 14. Lay in camp all day, all in doubt. April 15. Returned to Camp Shelton. Our outposts attacked. Two of our men killed and one wounded. Sent out a scout but found no Indians. April 16 & 17. Did not move. Weather very hot. [April] 18. Commenced our return march and advanced eight miles to the Hillsborough. Greatly retarded in our march by the quantity of our supplies. Joined this by Genl. Scott who had disbanded his column of troops at Tampa Bay and now returns with us. It is understood the campaign for this season is closed.
April 19. Marched this day 14 miles. [April] 20. Marched this day 15 miles, crossed the Withlacouchee [Withlacoochee], sun melting hot, many sick. April 21. Marched 14 miles, re-passed the Dade battle ground, reviewed the murderous spot. April 22. Left the main road and took an Indian trail for Volusia. Marched 18 miles. April 23. Wee fired upon last night several times, but it was so dark and the forest so dense that we dare not leave camps. Two men badly wounded and also several horses. All hands under arms most of the night. At daylight the Indians disappeared and we paid no more attention to them. Marched on at sunrise and made a stretching march of 20 miles. Many men gave out. Very hot. April 24. Re-crossed the Ocklawaha [Ocklawaha], marched 16 miles, came upon a small party of Indians and chased them into a hammock. Could not get them. April 25. Arrived at the St. Johns opposite Volusia in the afternoon and crossed the river that night. Here we shall remain some days, secure the public property and discharge the volunteers, half of whom are sick and many helpless. I am informed that we, the regulars, will then go to St. Augustine for the summer until the sickly season is over. The men are now getting sick by hundreds. The war is not ended, hardly begun. In my opinion it will be a long war. I shall return to you as soon as I get to St. Augustine. I was never in better health. I have got used to hard fare and hard work. A piece of fat raw pork now relishes better than roast turkey at home. It is surprising how one changes in a short time in their tastes. I can keep anywhere.”

The above completes the extracts from the letters written to my wife in the woods of Florida. After completing our duties at Volusia, steam boats were sent up the St. Johns River to remove our command and the public property. We were in due time taken on board and landed at Picolata, 19 miles from St. Augustine. We remained here a few days and then marched across [sic] the country to St. Augustine in one day, and a hard days march it was, as the entire distance was a marsh and mud. We arrived in St. Augustine such of us as were not sick in fine spirits, having been absent in the interior 63 days, during which time all suffered greatly, and many poor fellows of our command found a grave in the wilderness of Florida, without a mark being left to shew the spot of his internment. But this was unavoidable. As for myself, having had some previous experience in soldiering, I took every possible precaution to provide myself against want, and did not unnecessarily expose myself to danger; but many from lack of experience and forethought did not exercise due caution and they accordingly paid the penalty, many of them with death. A majority of those who got back were half-naked and barefoot, dirty and sick. All the time my health was good. I was only sunburnt and ragged. Such was my hardened condition that I felt myself able to undergo almost anything. I soon as I arrived in St. Augustine and had renovated my person a little, I began to lay plans for getting out of Florida. After consulting my never failing friend Major Kirby, it was agreed that he should officially apply to Genl. Eustis to order me into North Carolina to get the company clothing and stores left at Fort Macon. I was of course to return to Florida with the clothing, etc., and bring on Maj. Kirby’s family. No discharge, however, could be thought
of from the regular army during a time of war, unless for sickness or expiration of
term of enlistment, and I had yet more than a year to serve. The order was readily
granted and I lost no time in getting off. I took a steamer for Charleston, S.C., via
Savannah, Geo. At Charleston I took passage on a small vessel for New Bern,
N.C. and after a most uncomfortable passage of a week we entered Ocracoke Inlet
25 miles north of Fort Macon. Here I left the vessel and hired a small boat and
one man to carry me through Bogue Sound to Fort Macon. We left Ocracoke in a
rain storm and was 12 hours in getting through, all the time wet to the skin. I was
so anxious [sic] to get home that I labored with an oar all the way. On the night of
the 20th May I reached Fort Macon, having been absent since 1st of Feby. Such a
joyful meeting as this was with my family I never before experienced. I found my
wife and children all well. All things during my absence had gone well. My wife
found kind friends to console her, and neither she nor myself had reason to
complain. I brought with me letters to several families who had husbands and
friends in Florida. I remained with my family a month, somewhat longer than I
intended but I could not obtain transportation. Being desirous of faithfully
fulfilling my promise to speedily [sic] return I went to New Bern and chartered a
small scooner [sic] to carry myself, the public property, and Mrs. Kirby, two
children and servant to Charleston, S.C. for the sum of $200. On the last of June
we all embarked at Fort Macon, set sail with a fair wind and reached Charleston
on the 2nd July. There we were detained until the 8th waiting for the sailing of the
St. Augustine packet. The time was however spent very pleasantly in visiting
various localities about the City. We set sail, had a pleasant passage of four days,
arriving at St. Augustine on the 12th. I had thus fulfilled my promise and
delivered my charge. I now informed Major Kirby that I was determined not to
remain in Florida and go through another campaign where neither honor or profit
was to be gained. But then how could I get away honorable? Major Kirby wrote
to Genl. Eustis, who had moved his headquarters to Charleston, about it. I wrote
to the Adjutant General in Washington. I entered upon duty in St. Augustine and
remained there until the 19th Sept. The summer was extremely hot and unhealthy.
Our soldiers were most all sick. Many died. St. Augustine was made the general
hospital of the army in Florida and by the 1st Sept. four large hospitals were filled
with the sick. I was very pleasantly situated, had good quarters in the old nunery
building and was not much exposed. I corresponded frequently with my wife but
felt much uneasiness as my pay was inadequate to support us in our separate
condition.

We heard frequently from the interior. The troops, generally small in
number, were much harassed, many of them sick, and occasionally some killed.
of Artillery, and ordered me to report to him at Head Quarters, Charleston, S.C.
This was good news, tho I did not intend to remain any longer than I could help in
this new position as the pay was too small to enable me to support my family
decently; besides, I should in all probability find myself back in Florida again in a
few months. I had applied to Adjt. Genl. Jones for the appointment of Ordinance
Sergeant.
I bid my comrades farewell, took passage in a steamer and was in Charleston in 36 hours. I was immediately assigned to duty at Fort Moultrie in Charleston Harbor, some five or six miles from the City. My duties were light and pleasant, and had my family been with me should felt quite contented. But my insufficient pay and separation from my family perplexed me. I also began to feel the effects of the climate. The jaundice came on me. I worried and doctored some time, finally I applied to Genl. Eustis to assist me in getting an ordinance sergeant’s position.

In due time I had my wishes gratified. I received the appointment from the Secretary of War and was ordered to Fort Caswell, near Smithville, at the mouth of Cape Fear River. The Fort was located on Oak Island, near two miles from the mainland. I left Charleston the last of October and went direct to Fort Macon after my family. I was now once more united with my family and I fully resolved that I would not again place myself in any position to be forced to leave them. I found all well and much rejoiced at my return. The perplexity now was to move. There was no direct means of transportation by either land or water between the two forts (Fort Macon and Fort Caswell or between Beaufort and Smithville). I had no alternative but to charter a small vessel on purpose to transport us. My money not being very flush, and to save expense, I engaged a small centre board schooner of only 13 tons for $60 to take my family and furniture to Fort Caswell, distance less than 100 miles down the coast. Our little craft was temporarily manned by a picked up crew of two men and a boy. When she came over to the Fort she appeared so old and so small that we were in great doubt about risking our lives in her, but being anxious to get to my station, as well as to save expense, the distances so short, and the season getting late, we concluded to risk it. The idea was to sail out to sea in the evening and if we had good luck, run into Smithville the next forenoon. The weather had been easterly and hazy for some days but an easterly wind was fair for us if it did not blow to hard. We got all shipped ready for sea, a number of friends advised us not to go out to sea that night, the weather appeared so threatening, but as we had already been delayed so long I determined to set sail. We got out over the outer bar about dusk and squared away down the coast with a strong wind and about 8 or 10 miles at sea from land. We found the wind increasing and a heavy sea running. Our little craft labored hard and pitched about awfully. The weather became very lowry and almost pitch darkness set in. It was too late to turn back or try to make a harbor. The wind increased most fearfully. Our Captain kept taking in sail until nothing was left standing but the jib. Towards midnight the wind had increased to a gale accompanied with snow and rain. The seas were very tumultuous. The jib was torn in pieces and we were drifting along before the wind at a fearful rate, not knowing how far we were from land and expecting to be engulfed by every wave or dashed in pieces in the breakers on shore. Our Captain was an old man in whom I had great confidence but he said he could do nothing. He could only lash up the helm and keep her head seaward with the hope she would drift to sea instead of landward. This was our only salvation. The Captain and men all came
below stating that the storm was so violent that they could not keep the deck and
could be of no further use. It was now most dreadful to think of and realize here
we all were, myself, wife, three small children, the Captain, and his men, all
huddled together in a small cabin not six feet square. Our little frail schooner
driving before the wind unchecked, first on the crest of a mountain wave and then
sinking into the fearful chasm between the waves, the motion so great as to almost
take away ones breath, the water making in upon us round the companionway, my
wife and children sick and vomiting, no fire, no light, in total darkness, cold and
shivering, the bilge water slapping from side to side, the spray from without
trickling in through every crack, and the vessel creaking. O, it was beyond
conception a dreadful night. I picked up our little daughter Frances out of the
water. My wife groaned at every lurch of the vessel. I fully made up my mind
that we all must sink into the deep, but I dared not say so. Indeed there was but
little said by anyone. I tried faintly to console and cheer my wife that we were
safe. In this manner we worried through the long hours of this dreadful autumnal
night, the most dreadful the Captain said he had ever experienced in more than
forty years of sea life. Daylight at length appeared. Then, and then only could we
realize our situation by a sight of the rolling waves. If[t] was impossible to stand
on deck, and when in the trough of the sea, each side appeared like walls of water
just about to overwhelm us, and when on the crest of these large waves it
appeared like going over a precipice. We were all wet and shivering with cold.
We knew not where we were. No land was visible. The next fear was that we
might drift upon the frying pan shoals running out many miles to sea from Cape
Fear, tho our old experienced Captain thought we had drifted by them outside
during the night, and that he judged in consequence of the immence [sic] waves,
we were in the gulf stream. His conjectures proved correct. The hold of our little
craft remained tight. Everything on her deck had been swepted off. About 12
o’clock the wind began to lull. Our hopes revived. By sundown it had become
quite calm. Still a heavy sea continued and we spent another night cold, wet, and
in darkness, tho not so much alarmed. On the next morning the sun rose clear, a
breese [sic] sprung up from the south, the sea calmed down. Our men hoisted
sails and we stood in towards land. We sailed with a fine wind, a smooth sea, and
the next morning at sunrise had the joyful sight of seeing Cape Fear lighthouse
just peering above the water to the north of us. This was the very place we most
desired to make, and its appearance was the first indication we had of our
whereabouts.

By noon we ran along side the wharf of Fort Caswell. Our hearts bounded
with joy in once more stepping on the solid earth. How joyful was our feelings.
We had come out safe from a most fearful gale in a little vessel, hardly considered
sea worthy, outside the sound she was built to run in, while the coast in many
places for hundreds of miles were strewed with the wrecks of larger ships. Our
escape was almost a miracle and we felt thankful.
We landed cold, wet, and hungry. Snow was yet on the ground. We were greatly disappointed on entering the Fort to find what a desolate place we had got into, but of this I will speak presently.

Our furniture was some damaged by sea water. We were undoubtedly saved by the forethought and care of our old Captain who prepared our little craft for sea. He had put into her about four tons of stone as ballast. Our furniture, although filling her hold, was light. This it was which made her ride those great waves so safely, almost like a gull, and kept her right side up. Such had been the violence of the gale that all our friends in Beaufort supposed we must be lost. Our little vessel was so old and frail that it was not thought possible she could ride out the night. I am thus particular in recording this voyage as it was so fearful and our escape so wonderful.

At Fort Caswell we found no residents and not a dwelling for a family. There were but a single large building inside the Fort erected for a citadel. This contained eight large rooms more than 40 feet long, having not a single window in them. The only light came through the portholes. To this building we repaired, carrying in our arms all our furniture, near half a mile from the wharf. We put all our plunder in one room having a fine place, collected some wood and built a fire. In this place we found ourselves, on a small island, with no means of getting over to the mainland. It was dismal enough. However, we took it all cheerfully, and laughed at our singular position. Fortunately for us we were enabled to get over to Smithville occasionally in a boat in charge of the Engineer Officer of the Fort who lived in Smithville and employed a few men in finishing some parts of the Fort. This work when we arrived had been suspended, but was soon after resumed. The men coming over in the morning & returning at night. Here I found I had nothing to take charge of but naked brick walls and bleak sand banks, and could only amuse myself by running round the shore of the Island with my children, reading and teaching. Here in this miserable place we worried through the winter, but we all got sick of such a life, and with Spring we determined to abandon so lonely a spot and move over into old Fort Johnston in the Village of Smithville. As the term of my enlistment would not expire until the 1st of the ensuing November, and as I now fully determined to quit service in the line of the army, we agreed that my wife with the children should go to her mothers in New London and remain there until I could obtain some other employment after the expiration of my present enlistment. We all moved over to Smithville and got comfortable quarters. In a month after, my wife packed up our most valuable and portable articles and with them and the children, got on board a Wilmington and New York sailing packet. In due time I was informed of her safe arrival in New London. I remained in Smithville until August doing nothing, when I sold off our furniture, packed my trunk, and started north, having determined that I would go to Washington and get my discharge the 1st Novr.

On my way I visited my acquaintances at Fort Macon, Beaufort and New Bern, and spent some time as I did not desire to reach Washington much before
my time would expire. I got to Washington the middle of October. I reported to
the Adjt. Genl. On the 1st Nov. and received my discharge. While I was casting
about Washington, I was offered a clerks position at the U.S. Arsenal at $1.75 per
diem, quarters rent free in the Arsenal, and the privilege of sutler. This was the
same position I unfortunately refused to accept three years before. I now most
gratefully accepted it. The preliminaries were soon settled and I started off to
New London to bring on my family.

I found all well and of course rejoiced at the prospect of once more
settling down, after the doubt and uncertainty, as to what I should find to do. We
soon arranged matters and took steamer to New York. There we found it
necessary to ship our heavy effects round by sea to Washington. We took the
land route making the journey easy by stopping over one night in both
Philadelphia and Baltimore. We proceeded direct to the Arsenal on our arrival in
Washington. Our bedding all being at sea we were greatly incommode but we
determined to put ourselves to no extra expense. We went into a naked house
with nothing but our trunks, borrowed a bed sack, filled it with straw and camped
on that. We had no utentals [sic] to cook with and nothing to eat. We picked up
a frying pan, tea kettle and coffee pots, a few eatable and eat our meals in the
most primitive style. We lived in this manner for ten days, when our articles
shipped by sea were received and we were more comfortable. I commenced my
duties and the future appeared fair. On the 1st Dec. I opened my sutlers store in
the morning, before 7 o’clock, from 12 to 1 o’clock, and one hour after six in the
evening, or in other words three hours a day. I was consequently engaged in the
public service 10 hours and in my store 3 hours each day. This was pretty hard
duty. But I now determined to change my whole course of life and no longer
follow shadows.

I was now 31 years old with a wife and three children. I had not saved or
laid up a penny. My wife had cheerfully followed me in my wanderings and
shared any ups and downs without an unpleasant murmur. Here I might stop this
narrative as it closes all the prominent scenes of my wandering life. Here too in
many respects ceases the anxieties we often experienced on account of our
poverty and uncertainty as to the future of our young family. This was a subject
often conned over by Lucretia and myself during the past seven years of married
life. From this date we have lived a quiet regular settled life. We have lived
comfortably and respectably and have each year added something to our store in
money and I trust also to our general intelligence. While we have endeavored to
live and save up the means to educate our children, we have at the same time
contributed freely to our less fortunate relatives.

I will now briefly notice some of the prominent changes and
circumstances which has transpired during the past 12 years for the information of
the younger children. The older can remember all and need no telling.
We resided rent free in comfortable quarters on the Arsenal grounds during the years 1838, '39, '40, and '41, and enjoyed all the comforts we could reasonably desire. A painful incident happened on the 10th March 1838 by the death of our only son, Enos, who was suddenly carried off by scarlet fever. He was only sick about 24 hours. He was near four years old and a beautiful boy on whom I greatly doted. But it was one of those mysterious dispensations of providence which no one can provide against and we were compelled to submit in humble and helpless acquiescence to its mandates.

On the 11th August 1839 we had a daughter born to us and to whom we gave the name of Sarah Amanda, the first name after my mother and the second after my esteemed cousin Amanda Scribner, who had been spending some months in our family. During this year (1839) I made a visit to Duanesburgh to see my mother. I had not seen since I ran away from my uncle in 1822. In some respects it was a painful meeting. She did not know me and I should not recognized her had I met her in any other place unexpectedly. When I last saw her she was a middle aged woman. I now found her white haired and bowed down with years and infirmities. When she last saw me I was a ragged boy. I desired to take care of her and with this view I persuaded her to return with me to Washington. She consented and I brought her home with me. But she soon became dissatisfied and I was compelled for peace’s sake to send her back to Duanesburgh. I found it impossible to keep her contented with all the kindness I could show her. She had all her life resided in the country and she preferred it to all the luxury and comforts I could bestow upon her.

On the 4th December 1840 we had a son born. We named him Martin Van. Having all my life been a democrat in my political sentiments, and this boy having been born at a time when the Harrison-Coon-skin, hard cider and log-cabin party had by noise, confusion, and fraud succeeded in overwhelming the democratic party, and as I then thought (and still think) most unjustly, I named him after the retiring democratic President, Martin Van Buren, to show my respect for that man, his administration, and to commemorate my own political principles.

In 1842, I made for me quite a purchase of real estate in the neighborhood of the Arsenal, being determined in case of my death that my family should be provided with a home. One of the houses at the corner of 4 ½ and N south I fitted up in a substantial manner for my own residence. We moved into it in the month of July 1842 and it has continued to be our residence to the present writing. Soon after we had moved into our new house, I erected a handsome brick store on the corner and opened a general variety store. But finding that my private business interfered too much with my public duties I took in a partner. In June 1845 President Polk sent for me to call at the Presidential Mansion. I did so and found the Secretary of War Governor Marcy and the President together. I was most cordially received. The President said that he desired something for me, that he thought I was entitled to some promotion, and offered me a clerkship in the War
So flattering a testimonial I could not well refuse, although pecuniarily it would not materially increase my income. I accepted and was assigned to duty in the Quarter Master Generals bureau in the army clothing branch. I served in this department one year. June 1846, President Polk nominated me to the Senate for the appointment of Paymaster & Military Storekeeper in the Ordnance Dept. of the Army. In due time, my nomination was confirmed. I received my commission, entered into the required bonds, $20,000, and I was assigned to duty at the Washington Arsenal, where I had served eight years as chief clerk. I was alone indebted to President Polk for this distinguished mark of consideration, and shall ever feel a grateful sense of obligation, as politics did not come into consideration in my appointment. I was selected for this position solely on account of my long and faithful service in the army and at the Arsenal. A great effort was made by politicians to get this appointment but the President was firm in his preference for me. The officers of the Ordnance Dept. were also in my favor. I now gave up all my private business, rented my store to R.B. Clark, my late partner, and devoted my whole time to the duties of my office. I was however soon after induced to become a party in connection with John Van Riswick to the purchase of a planing Mill and its patents, and for a few months engaged in the lumber business, for the purpose of securing a debt due me which otherwise might be lost. I did not however devote any of my time to the business, my partner carrying it on. I sold out my interest to my partner after a few months and here I made one of the greatest mistakes of my life as he has made an independent fortune out of it. I should have resigned all public employment at this time and gone in with my partner. He so advised me. But I was afraid to abandon a certainty for what I thought might not be successful. I have since done no private business but devoted my whole time to the responsible duties of my office. The breaking out of the Mexican War threw into our Arsenal an immense amount of labor and a large force of men in the preparation of war supplies. The property in my charge exceeded all the time over a million in value and I disbursed for stores and the pay of men from two to three hundred thousand dollars annually.

On the 3rd Feby. 1848 we had another son born to us. We named him DeWitt after DeWitt Clinton of the State of N.Y., one of the greatest men of our country, and in my opinion the greatest benefactor of my native state.

I have thus briefly noticed the important changes and phases in the condition of myself, wife, & children. When we moved to Washington we had only hopes of getting a respectable living. We were almost destitute of money and had but a small stock of household comforts. In face we commenced a new life. We have lived retired, entertained but little company to eat and drink up our earnings, devoted our time and abilities to our business and the education of our children.
Our oldest daughter Frances has been absent from home at school most of the time for the past four years and our second daughter Mary Jane near two years. This has greatly added to our expenses.

As a general thing we have lived plain and temperate and as a consequence have not paid many doctors bills. Some of the family and especially myself have occasionally been afflicted with the ague and fever, but that is a disease incident to the climate and peculiar locality. Very few in any condition of life escape this disease in the region of Washington.

We have made it a general rule in the management of our affairs to add a little annually to our means and all things considered have no great reason to complain of the results attending our exertions. It is very true that with all our industry and economy we have not made what may be termed a fortune, but we have got a home and habitation of our own. We can now see and judge correctly of the past. Had we commenced living in 1830 as we did in 1837, we might in all probability have been much better circumstanced. In my early life I could not see the necessity of saving. I did not realize this until the necessities of an increasing and growing up family opened my eyes. Such is unfortunately too often the case with the young and they do not see their folly until an accumulating family and the consequent increased expense in maintaining them puts its out of their power to lay by anything. The results are poverty with all its train of evils, ignorance, toilsome labor for a bare pittance, often the extreme of degradation, and a miserable dependent old age.

I mention these things to shew how necessary it is for all young men to provide for the future at the proper time of life. Commence their active life as they should by the practice of virtue, industry, economy, and sobriety, and at the same time be governed in all their transactions with principles of honor and strict honesty in their domestic as well as public deportment. Exact truthfulness in all things will always have its reward, especially in all our family intercourse. No parent can command the respect of their children who practices duplicity and falsehood. Life is a riddle at best, and most all can look back and detect their errors, mine have been many on account of the neglect of my early training, inexperience, and ignorance.

Here for the present I will stop, reserving to myself to add some future time such further remarks as circumstances may produce events of any note. I will only add in conclusion that I have avoided recording anything about my speculative notices on the subject of religion as I do not desire to be instrumental in prejudicing the minds of any of my children on that subject. My aim has been through life to practice and uphold all the moral precepts as I understand them, and set before my children a good example. How far I have succeeded in this respect they will I hope judge me leniently. I have sincerely desired to give them a sound practical education, and to keep their minds unbiased, to set before them such lights as would be to their benefit, and then let them judge for themselves.
and form their own opinions in accordance with the dictates of their reason and the instinct of common sense within them.

U.S. Arsenal, Washington City, March 8, 1849