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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors Thesis entitled

“Devotedly Yours: The Prison Letters of Captain Joseph Scrivner

Ambrose IV, C.S.A.”

written by

Rebecca Helen Pedrick

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for completion
of the Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

Thesis Director – Dr. Trey Berry

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December 9, 2005

**“Devotedly Yours:
The Prison Letters of Captain Joseph Scrivner Ambrose,
C.S.A.”**

written by

Rebecca Pedrick

9 December 2005

Tales of war—valor, courage, intrigue, winners, losers, common men, outstanding officers. Such stories captivate, enthrall, and inspire each generation, though readers often feel distanced from the participants. The central figures of these tales are heroes, seemingly beyond the reach of ordinary men. Through a more intimate glimpse of one such figure, the affectionate letters of Joseph Scrivner Ambrose to his sister, written from prison during America’s Civil War, perhaps one can find more than a hero – one can find a man with whom one can identify, a man who exemplifies the truth of the old adage, “Heroes are made, not born.”¹

The Man and His Heritage

Joseph Scrivner Ambrose’s family heritage bequeathed him legacies of valor in battle, restless thirsts for exploration, and deep religious conviction.² Ancestors on both sides served their country both on the battlefield and in the home, raising large families and settling the far reaches of the young American nation.

Joseph Scrivner hailed from a long line of men who fought, some for noble and some for perhaps more ignoble reasons. His great-grandfather on his mother’s side, John Clements, immigrated to America in the mid-1700s. According to family lore, Clements seriously injured another young man in a duel while attending university. Guilt over his actions caused John to flee to America, where he began a new life. He and his wife, Elizabeth Thompson, settled in Augusta County, Virginia, where their fourth child, Roger, was born January 1, 1762.

¹ See Appendix 1 for the complete set of Ambrose’s letters.

² See Appendix 2 for a Clement-Ambrose family tree.

Roger, Joseph's grandfather, married Hannah Hathaway and moved farther west. His enlistment record from the Revolutionary War (in which he served as a private) states his residence as Rowan County, North Carolina. He and his family later moved to Kentucky, raising fifteen children, the tenth being Hannah, Joseph's mother.

Joseph Ambrose I, Joseph Scrivner's great-grandfather on his father's side, also immigrated to the United States as a young man, in 1762. His wife and sons arrived the following year and they settled in Virginia, where her family had settled earlier. Upon the Revolutionary War's commencement, he and his sons Joseph II and William signed up for military service. Joseph II, only sixteen years when he enlisted in the Pack Horse Brigade, served in it for three years before joining the regular army, finishing out the Revolution in General George Washington's regiment.

Joseph II married Elizabeth Sarah Ricketts and moved from Virginia to Kentucky in 1806, with eight-year-old Joseph III in tow. They settled for a time in Adair County, Kentucky, but after the War of 1812 moved to Clay County. Following in their father and grandfather's footsteps, the two eldest Ambrose boys, Moses and Thomas, enlisted in Tennessee to fight under General Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812.

Joseph Scrivner's immediate family exemplified the religious upbringing evident in his letters. His father, Joseph III, received his ordination in the Baptist denomination shortly after his marriage to Hannah Clements on December 21, 1826. Joseph III and Hannah had nine children, of whom Joseph Scrivner (Joseph IV) was the sixth. Joseph III established himself well and provided quite handsomely for his family. Upon moving to Estill County, Kentucky, Joseph III acquired a great deal of land; tax records from 1845 show him to be the owner of 2085 acres. In 1855, he relocated himself and his family to

Gallatin County, Kentucky, where he started Concord Church and ministered in that pulpit as well as several other area churches. In 1857, a work cart overturned, leaving him crippled but still able to preach, which he continued to do until further health problems and old age prevented him.

Joseph Scrivner Ambrose's heritage offered examples of honor, duty, faith, courage, and valor. Born on February 18, 1835, in Clay County, Kentucky, he most likely enjoyed a comfortable childhood. His letters reveal a well-educated man whom life treated fairly well. His letters express fondness for all of his family members and especially his immediate younger sister Nannie (Nancy), to whom he wrote. Upon returning to Kentucky in 1865 after the war, he met a young woman named Nannie (Nancy) Connley, whom he married on February 25, 1866, in Gallatin County. They had two children, Cleora, born in late 1866 (no date), and Frank, born July 29, 1874. Joseph died on December 9, 1896, in Paris, Texas.³

The Kentucky Situation

The Commonwealth of Kentucky played a unique role as the Civil War unfolded. Nicknamed the "Irish of America" due to their fiercely independent nature, Kentuckians had no use for outsiders telling them what to do. Kentucky culture was a conglomeration of southern, western, and northern values and traditions, which prompted lengthy debate on a variety of issues. While living in a slave state, only a fourth of Kentucky citizens owned slaves in 1860, and two-thirds of these owned five or fewer slaves. Deep South plantation style culture never flourished in the state, and most slave owners involved in

³ Family history taken from Dawley family history and notes; dates of marriage and death of Joseph IV from genealogy work done at Library of Congress, 5/26/2005, Westfall-Maxwell genealogy and Ryle relatives, <www.ancestry.com>.

agriculture cultivated small family farms. Slave-owning farmers controlled a majority of the population's wealth, but city factories also worked a large proportion of the state's slave force. Kentucky utilized more urban slaves than many other Southern states.⁴

Despite such economic dependency on the "peculiar institution," Kentuckians claimed the South's most widespread public debates between pro-slavery advocates and a homegrown abolitionist movement that thrived within Kentucky's borders until about 1850.⁵ Most Kentuckians viewed slavery ambivalently. While numerically the state had more slave owners than all but two other Southern states, their outlook varied greatly from that of stereotypical Southern slave-owners. Many Kentucky slaveholders leaned Whig, valuing the Union above their personal right to own slaves. Radical secessionists provoked an outcry within Kentucky, many of whose citizens considered secession disloyal.⁶

President Lincoln recognized Kentucky's importance as a border state when he stressed that "I hope to have God on my side, but I must have Kentucky."⁷ When eleven states seceded by June of 1861, it became imperative that the Union retain Kentucky; Lincoln even wrote, "To lose Kentucky is the lose the whole game."⁸ As one writer put it, "A bewildered observer from abroad might well have concluded that the U.S. had become three countries: the Union, the Confederacy, and Kentucky."⁹

A microcosm of America, Kentuckian sentiments ran strong on both sides of the debate. When Union men took over the Commonwealth government by election in the

⁴ Steven A. Channing, *Kentucky: A Bicentennial History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), 76-96.

⁵ Steven A. Channing, *Kentucky*, 97-108.

⁶ Steven A. Channing, *Kentucky*, 112.

⁷ Steven A. Channing, *Kentucky*, 114.

⁸ Steven A. Channing, *Kentucky*, 115.

⁹ Lowell Harrison, quoted in Steven A. Channing, *Kentucky*, 116.

summer of 1861, Confederate sympathizers formed their own government, eventually established at Bowling Green. Even though the Kentucky government had declared itself neutral in the conflict, President Lincoln opened a recruitment camp in Kentucky, blatantly disregarding that neutrality. This action sent Kentucky boys over the border to Tennessee, where they could enlist with the Confederate army. On September 4, 1861, Confederate troops entered the state and took over Columbus. In retaliation, Federal troops occupied Paducah the next day.¹⁰

Ambrose's enlisted as a Confederate in Company F, 8th Kentucky Cavalry, mustering in as a Captain. He joined up September 10, 1862, in Boone County, Kentucky.¹¹ Because the Union controlled Kentucky records, very little primary information exists on Kentuckians who fought with the South. Southern records kept in Frankfort found their way to Richmond, Virginia, as the war progressed and subsequently perished when that city burned. According to a state historian at the Kentucky Military Museum, the only reason that any information exists on men such as Ambrose lies solely in the fact that they entered the United States prisoner of war system.¹²

Although Ambrose never references the situation in his letters home, presumably he and other men in his regiment struggled, knowing that their home state did not support their stand and that family and friends back home encountered opposition from neighbors because of their military service.

Parole, Exchange, and the Oath of Allegiance

¹⁰ Steven A. Channing, *Kentucky*, 117-122.

¹¹ NARA, microfilm. Confederate Prisoners of War.

¹² Kentucky Military Museum, Frankfort, KY. Visited June 2, 2005.

During the war's first year or so, no one had established a process for prisoner-of-war exchanges. This remained a tricky issue for the Federal government and required well-thought-out planning. Because a prisoner-of-war exchange system by definition existed between two autonomous governments, the Union authorities could not immediately agree to "exchange" for the simple reason that doing so would implicitly recognize the Confederate government.¹³ The North desired to treat the Confederacy as a rebellious group of states, rather than an independent government as long as possible. Agreeing to a prisoner cartel would utterly defeat that position. For the time being, both governments honored an unspoken "gentlemen's agreement," by which men from both sides were exchanged on a case-by-case basis. Generally this exchange was limited to officers of equal rank from each side.¹⁴

By mid-1862, both sides agreed on the imminent need for some sort of exchange policy. D.H. Hill, Major-General in the Confederates States Army, and John A. Dix, Major-General in the United States Army, drew up what came to be known as the Dix-Hill Cartel, which provided some structure for the difficult business of prisoner exchange. The day after meeting with Hill at Haxall's Landing, Virginia, Dix commented in a letter to Secretary of War Stanton, "It is very important to me that we should get the prisoners of the insurgents off our hands without the loss of a day unnecessarily as they are paroling and delivering our sick and wounded. Large numbers of our men die after

¹³ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. I.47.III. 516

¹⁴ Dale Fetzer and Bruce Mowday, *Unlikely Allies: Fort Delaware's Prison Community in the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000), 64; Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Prisons and Escapes: A Day-by-Day Chronicle* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.), 1993. 11

delivery and are counted in the exchange, while theirs who die before the delivery are not counted; so we lose both ways.”¹⁵

Signed July 22, 1862, the Cartel gave explicit instructions for release and delivery of men on both sides. These instructions included levels of exchange in Article 1 (enlisted for enlisted, officer for officer; equivalencies scales for exchange of differently ranked men), determination of ranks in Article 2, non-military or civilian offenses in Article 3, number of days in which parole must occur in Article 4, reciprocal response of parties on either side in Article 5, and various items including the definition of parole in Article 6. According to the Cartel, prisoners were to be “discharged on parole in ten days after their capture” and taken to previously agreed-upon points of exchange. Once paroled, no man was allowed to again take up arms against the enemy or in any way serve in a military position.¹⁶

While initially the Cartel looked promising to military leadership on both sides, flaws very quickly appeared. Within a month, Major-General Samuel Jones, commanding Confederate forces at Chattanooga, Tennessee, wrote to Major-General D.C. Buell, who commanded United States forces, regarding the parole and exchange of some Southern prisoners. Jones alleged that Union forces had captured and shot Southerner soldiers on many different occasions during the previous month. He also protested Buell’s order, that had reached the Confederate forces, which directly conflicted with the manner of releasing prisoners prescribed by the Cartel.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Official Records*. II.4. 265-266.

¹⁶ *Official Records*. II.4.266-267.

¹⁷ *Official Records*. II.4.414-415. Maj. Gen. Jones goes on to say, “For these atrocious acts no measures of a retaliatory character have been ordered by the commander of the Confederate forces in this quarter...[the commander] feels it needless to point out to you the inevitable consequences that must ensue from a repetition of such sanguinary violations of the rules of war.” He further remarks, “[your order number 41 is] in direct conflict with the third paragraph under Article 5 of the Cartel... ‘all prisoners of

Throughout late 1863, many imprisoned men still hoped to be exchanged, having no idea that the entire system was disintegrating. Ambrose mentioned in more than one letter his desire to be exchanged, and asked his sister to petition a Union commander on his behalf. Union Secretary of War Edwin Stanton halted all prisoner exchanges on July 3, 1863, mainly because of Southern refusal to exchange Northern Negro soldiers for Southern white soldiers (the South had persisted in denying the legitimacy of Negroes in the military and therefore refused to include them in the exchange process). In addition, both sides greatly distrusted each other. The cartel collapsed in 1864 under such dysfunction.¹⁸

Taking the Oath of Allegiance was the only other recourse available to captured Southerners who wished to avoid incarceration. This oath pledged faithfulness to the United States Constitution, and included a promise to refrain from taking up arms against it. Union forces offered nearly every prisoner the chance to take the oath, either upon capture or while in prison. Parole became the incentive for many Southern men, but often they did not understand what taking the oath entailed. Though they gained their freedom, those who signed the oath lost the respect of friends and countrymen. Often looked upon as deserters and traitors, oath-takers became anathema to those still proud of their gray uniforms.¹⁹

whatever arm of service are to be exchanged or paroled in ten days from the time of their capture if it be practicable' ... This plainly makes it the duty of the capturing party to parole, and assuredly the execution of your order must nullify that agreement and in a short while lead to consequences of a dual character which it is thought you can scarcely desire shall characterize the war on this border."

¹⁸ Phillip R. Shriver and Donald J. Breen, "Ohio's Military Prisons in the Civil War," *Ohio Civil War Centennial Commission Publications* (Ohio State University Press for the Ohio Historical Society, 1964), 4.

¹⁹ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 111; *Official Records*, I.2.214, 650.

The Raid

General John Hunt Morgan, a bold and sometimes brash Confederate cavalry officer, during the spring of 1863 planned a raid through Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. At the receipt of somewhat hesitant permission from General Braxton Bragg after a disappointing spring for Morgan's Company, he, along with approximately 2,500 cavalry soldiers, prepared for what would become the Civil War's most infamous cavalry raid.²⁰

Strategically, armies employed raids for specific purposes. Attacking armies launched offensive invasions of enemy territory for diversionary purposes in order to confuse and intimidate, as well as draw attention from the real attack. This maneuver also served reconnaissance purposes and aided in gathering intelligence while destroying the enemy's bases of operations and hampering their efforts to retaliate. A raid, in essence, was "a limited-objective attack for a specific purpose other than gaining and holding ground...with a planned withdrawal after the completion of the assigned mission."²¹ Morgan promoted this tactic as a diversion so that Bragg could move his troops farther south without Union interference. More indirectly, Morgan hoped to regain his stature as an able commander after a series of defeats that had defined his spring.²²

John Hunt Morgan displayed his brashness on the battlefield in many ways. He sometimes employed the white "flag of truce" to quiet Union army attacks and approach their front lines. After disarming them, Morgan would capture said troops or gain intelligence information. Then, to completely humiliate the Union troops, he and his men

²⁰ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War, a Narrative: Fredericksburg to Meridian*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 671.

²¹ Lester V. Horwitz, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War: Little-Known & Untold stories of Morgan's Raid in Kentucky, Indiana & Ohio* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Farmcourt Publishing, Inc. 1999), 1.

²² Shelby Foote, *The Civil War*, 671.

would take the captured soldiers' clothing and equipment and send them back to their commanding officer, declaring them "paroled."²³

Morgan's attitude during this raid proved no different. While Bragg had granted Morgan permission for a ride through Kentucky (a Union state filled with Confederate sympathizers—several of Morgan's cavalry divisions, including Ambrose's, hailed from that state), Morgan from the beginning planned something far more daring. Bragg expressly stated that Morgan was not to cross the Ohio River, but because communication took several weeks to travel back and forth, Bragg was powerless by the time he found out that Morgan had defied his orders.²⁴

Ambrose and the other troops followed Morgan from McMinnville, Tennessee (where the raid began), and during the first week of July 1863, the men entered Kentucky, headed for Indiana. The Confederates encountered few Federal troops as they crossed Tennessee and Kentucky, engaging in only minor skirmishes. Morgan attacked Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, commander of the Army of the Ohio, the first week in July. Burnside chased the Confederates across Kentucky, following them into Indiana.

Morgan had hoped that once he crossed the border, Confederate sympathizers known as Copperheads, who inhabited much of the area just north of the Ohio River in Indiana, would come to his aid. However, Morgan would be sorely disappointed by the response. On July 8, Morgan and his men crossed the Ohio River at Brandenburg, Kentucky, and entered Indiana. Because they were behind enemy lines and completely cut off from Southern aid, Ambrose and the rest of Morgan's men quickly found

²³ Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 88.

²⁴ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War*, 671.

themselves running short of supplies. Thus commenced the more infamous Confederate activities of the raid: the looting of homes, stores, and farms for food and supplies.²⁵

July 9, the day after crossing the Ohio, Morgan and his men approached Corydon, Indiana, where they encountered the local militia, or home guard. In order to save precious time, Morgan made the decision to plough through that home guard, inflicting three hundred sixty casualties, while suffering only forty-one, with eight dead and thirty-three missing. The next day, Morgan continued his march, taking prisoners whom he later “paroled”—a move the Southern agent for exchange, Robert Ould, used to his advantage in getting Southern prisoners paroled and exchanged.²⁶

Some time during these maneuvers, Morgan learned that Vicksburg had fallen and Bragg had begun a full retreat. This information radically changed the raid’s future. Morgan’s sole responsibility now lay in continuing to distract Burnside, leading him on a chase through Indiana and then Ohio, away from Bragg. The longer Morgan could keep Burnside occupied chasing him, the longer he could stall Northern plans for an advance on Tennessee.²⁷

On July 12, Morgan’s ride through Indiana ended. He crossed into Ohio the next day at Harrison, just twenty miles from Cincinnati, heading for the state’s southeast section and a re-entry into Kentucky. Morgan drove his exhausted Confederate cavalymen straight through Cincinnati, covering nearly ninety miles in thirty-six hours before reaching their stopping point for the evening of the fourteenth, Williamsburg, Ohio. At this point, Ambrose and the rest of Morgan’s men had covered several hundred

²⁵ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War*, 681; Lester V. Horwitz, *The Longest Raid*, 1; Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 104.

²⁶ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War*, 679-680; Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 105.

²⁷ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War*, 680.

miles in two weeks. As exhaustion set in, men and horses began to give out along the ride; most of these were captured and sent to Camp Morton military prison in Indianapolis.²⁸

Before the raid, Morgan's scouts determined that he should ford the Ohio River at Buffington Island, where a thirty-inch depth made passage by enemy gunboats impossible. This meant that Morgan could expect few barriers to his escape back into friendlier territory. However, during his raid, heavy rains swelled the river far beyond its normal flow. By July 13, the Ohio River had risen four feet above normal, deepening the water around Buffington Island to six feet, a depth in which Northern gunboats could easily maneuver. Unbeknownst to Morgan, the North had boats and men in position by the time he arrived at the border.²⁹

Upon entering Ohio, Morgan and his men encountered worsened circumstances. One young soldier, N.B. Stanfield of the 1st Kentucky Cavalry, stated in his journal, "We were blockaded and bushwhacked from the start, for the Yankees in all parts were after us."³⁰ All along the road, civilians cut down trees, burned bridges, and greatly hindered Morgan's progress. Not only this, but between 60,000 and 100,000 Union troops began closing in on Morgan and his men from all sides.³¹ By this time, Morgan had lost over five hundred of his men to physical exhaustion, capture, and death. To face his enemy, he now had fewer than two thousand weary cavalrymen.³²

With these hindrances significantly slowing Morgan's ride through Ohio, not until July 18 did he and his men near Buffington. After passing through Pomeroy and Chester,

²⁸ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War*, 681; Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 105.

²⁹ Lester V. Horwitz, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*, 191.

³⁰ Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 105.

³¹ *Official Records*, I.52.I.398-416.

³² Shelby Foote, *The Civil War*, 681; Denney, Robert E., *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 105.

Ohio, that day, they stopped for the night because Federal troops held the intended crossing.

Buffington Island, a 150 acre strip of land measuring one-quarter by 1.2 miles, sits squarely in the Ohio River. The Ohio shoreline opposite it includes a valley of farmland rising into a high ridge. This ridge follows the river for quite a ways, trailing down to the river's edge and ending in virtually unscalable stone cliffs. On this stretch of farmland, looking out over the island, Ambrose, Morgan, and the Confederates made camp in preparation for battle.³³

Enshrouded in heavy fog, Ambrose awoke Sunday morning the 19th to the sounds of gunfire. The Confederates found themselves embroiled in battle with Union soldiers, under fire from the USS *Moose* and the steamer *Allegheny Bell*. About five thousand fresh Union troops approached the halted Confederates from behind, having marched in from Pomeroy.³⁴ At 5:30 that morning, fighting began. The gunboat *Moose*'s heavy battery absolutely stunned the Confederates. The barrage of bullets and heavy artillery prevented Confederate movement in any direction. Surrounded on all sides and bone weary, Morgan's men put up a good fight, but were no match for the massed fire of many thousands of well-rested Union troops.³⁵

As mid-morning approached, chaos engulfed the Confederate troops; many of Ambrose's fellow soldiers broke ranks and scrambled to find an escape route. Scattering up and down the river valley, most found no way to run, and Federal troops quickly

³³ Lester V. Horwitz, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*, 208.

³⁴ Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 107; Shelby Foote, *The Civil War*, 682. The Battle of Buffington Island did not actually occur on the island itself, but in the vicinity, on farmland near the town of Portland, Ohio. Being a well-known local landmark, Buffington Island became the historical reference point.

³⁵ Lester V. Horwitz, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*, 213-215.

gathered them up. By 10 o'clock in the morning, the Federals had 573 Confederate men in their hands. Towards the battle's end, around 2:30 that afternoon, Federals had captured seven hundred Confederates, including Captain Ambrose. A group of Confederates managed to escape down river and elude capture. Unable to escape the grasp of the Union army permanently, however, Morgan and the remaining four hundred or so men with him surrendered one week later, on July 26, 1863, to Union Major George W. Rue at New Lisbon, Ohio.³⁶ They were the last of the Confederates who had covered over one thousand miles of Union territory during their nearly month-long raid, reaching farther into the North than any other Southern campaign.³⁷

The original seven hundred prisoners, of which Ambrose was a part, found themselves transported to Cheshire, Ohio, a little less than fifty miles west of Buffington Island. The Federal army housed them in the Cheshire Academy Dormitory, a very new three-story building there. Captured officers, including colonels, lieutenant colonels and captains, received paroles of honor, which allowed them to stay at a hotel in town and roam the town. Although not expressly stated, Joseph Ambrose most likely numbered amongst this privileged company. A special squadron of Union men, including a group of Cincinnati militia who arrived July 20, guarded the captured officers. While many prisoners of war, on both sides, suffered harsh treatment at the hands of non-combatants in whose charge they were placed, Morgan's men found the Cincinnati militiamen, all being ex-soldiers recently discharged for illness or wounds, excellent guards.³⁸

³⁶ Lester V. Horwitz, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*, 219-224; Monument, Buffington Island State Park, near Portland, Ohio; *Official Records*, I.27.III.774.

³⁷ Monument, outskirts of Lisbon, Columbiana County, Ohio.

³⁸ Lester V. Horwitz, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*, 246; Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 11.

After a night's sleep, the Confederates found themselves aboard two steamboats headed upriver toward the Prisoners of War Depot at Johnson's Island Prisoner of War camp near Sandusky, Ohio. A roll card from the depot has "Joseph S. Ambrose, Capt., 8 Regiment, Kentucky Cavalry" inscribed on it, along with the place and date captured (the card lists these as Cheshire, OH, and July 20, 1863, respectively). It also says "joined Cincinnati July 28, 1863," perhaps regarding when he arrived in Cincinnati in preparation for transportation to Johnson's Island. Some time in the previous few days, these prisoners were probably reunited with Morgan and the rest of the division, captured on July 28. At this juncture, rank divided the destinations of Morgan's men. Enlisted men went to various prisoner of war camps throughout the North. Special treatment awaited Morgan and his officers.³⁹

The First Prison

The Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio, had already achieved infamy by 1863 as a prison. Rumors of torture and primitive housing conditions ran rampant almost from the time of its inception in 1832. No crime seemed terrible enough for confinement in the Ohio State Penitentiary – at least to those condemned.

The penitentiary was located in northwest Columbus, near the Scioto River. The prison complex occupied twenty-five acres, twenty-two of them enclosed behind heavy stone walls, twelve to eighteen feet high. A well-kept exterior, complete with flowering shrubs and manicured gardens, belied a cold, damp, silent, hostile interior. Two buildings housed cellblocks measuring one hundred feet in length, twenty feet in width, and about

³⁹ Lester V. Horwitz, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*, 247; National Archives and Records Administration, microfilm library. Series M319 roll 43, "Compiled service records of Confederate Soldiers who served in Organizations from Kentucky," 7th Cav. Su-Z, 8th Cav. A-Bo.

forty feet in height. The complex also boasted a dining hall, kitchen, laundry room, and several workshops, where prisoners plied their previous trade or trained in a new one (if they had had no such handiwork experience prior to incarceration).⁴⁰

Inside, each prisoner endured solitary confinement for a majority of each day. One young man captured during Morgan's raid reflected, somewhat sarcastically, in a letter to his sister, "...I have a magnificent little cell all to myself. It is seven feet by three and a half feet. In this little cell I spend fourteen out of twenty-four hours. The remainder of the twenty four [sic] is spent in a hall one hundred eighty by twelve feet with the remainder of the rebel prisoners confined here...."⁴¹ Prison rules stipulated a code of absolute silence for all prisoners, although looking at correspondence it would seem the Confederate captives escaped this standard.

Upon arrival, the seventy Confederate officers (the only prisoners of war ever housed in the Penitentiary) entered the prison guard room, located between the cell blocks, which served as the main entrance into the prison grounds.⁴² Met by a wall of heavy iron bars which lined the front of the room, these men had little cause for hope as they looked beyond it to their new home, the inner courts of the prison. Those bars held only the promise of despair, cold silence, and homesickness, with no knowledge of when reprieve might come.

Under the Dix-Hill Cartel's regulations, established early in the Civil War as guidelines for prisoners of war and prisoner exchange, it was illegal for these Southern

⁴⁰ "The Ohio penitentiary: The Outrage to which General Morgan has been subjected," *The Charleston Mercury*, September 8, 1863, accessed at the Library of Congress via internet, 5/26/2005. <www.accessible.com/accessible/text/civilwar/00000081/00008169.htm>; Hines, Capt. Thomas H., *Thrilling Narrative of the Escape of Gen. John H. Morgan, from the Ohio Penitentiary*, (O.P. Print, 1897), 1-2.

⁴¹ Samuel Burks Taylor, letter to sister, from Penitentiary, Columbus, Oh, October 1, 1863. Ohio Historical Society Archives, accessed 6/1/2005.

⁴² Phillip R. Shriver, Donald J. Breen, "Ohio's Military Prisons in the Civil War," 6-7.

officers to be held in the Ohio State Penitentiary. They should have been transported to a military encampment specifically designed to house military prisoners. However, the United States government found itself in quite a quandary. If it agreed to treat men as “prisoners of war,” it implicitly recognized the South’s independence. It behooved the United States government to view prisoners of war simply as “traitors,” which technically meant that Southerners were still Northern citizens.⁴³

Also, by this time in the war, the Dix-Hill Cartel had begun to disintegrate under the load of politics and logistics. This left hundreds of men, on both sides, stranded in enemy territory with no avenue for aid. United States Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton ordered a complete halt of paroles and exchanges on July 3, 1863, just before Morgan and his men were captured.⁴⁴

All of these facts made the placement of Morgan’s men highly controversial, both North and South. To add insult to injury, all of the officers, including Ambrose and Morgan himself, received treatment generally dispensed to common criminals. Prison officials shaved the men’s heads and beards (a strong insult for a southern man; as one wrote, “Many would sacrifice almost anything rather than lose their beard”⁴⁵), then ordered them to strip naked to be bathed. Following baths, penitentiary officials handed each man a set of clothes to be worn during his incarceration. Rumors of Morgan’s treatment spread throughout the South, raising the ire of Southern men and women, many

⁴³ Phillip R. Shriver, Donald J. Breen, “Ohio’s Military Prisons in the Civil War,” 3-4.

⁴⁴ Phillip R. Shriver, Donald J. Breen, “Ohio’s Military Prisons in the Civil War,” 4.

⁴⁵ J.H. Matthews, *Historical Reminiscences of the Ohio Penitentiary*, (Columbus, Oh: Chas. M. Cott & Co., Bookprinters, 1884), 22.

of whom considered these actions as insulting as if personally experienced.⁴⁶

According to prisoner-of-war rosters, Ambrose arrived at the Penitentiary (most likely along with the other officers of Morgan's company) on August 1, 1863, by the order of General Burnside.⁴⁷ There is no indication that the officers expected to be transferred out. Ambrose' letters reveal very little about Penitentiary conditions, other than his health. The little available information comes from other men of his brigade, none of whom could write very honestly about his situation, due to wartime censors.

These men probably expected to remain at the Penitentiary indefinitely, waiting on paroles or the war's end. Instead, after eight months of confinement, and the escape of Morgan and a handful of other officers, the remaining Confederates received transfers to various military prisons throughout the North. Several were sent to Johnson's Island, Ohio, but Ambrose found himself in a convoy headed for Fort Delaware, Delaware.

Fort Delaware, Delaware

Located on an isle affectionately known as "Pea Patch Island" to locals, Fort Delaware sat in the middle of the Delaware River, just over a mile from the Delaware shoreline and a little less than equidistant from New Jersey. The island's name, bequeathed upon the seventy-five acres of earth early in its history, originated in a

⁴⁶ "The Ohio penitentiary: The Outrage to which General Morgan has been subjected," *The Charleston Mercury*, September 8, 1863, accessed at the Library of Congress via internet, 5/26/2005. <www.accessible.com/accessible/text/civilwar/00000081/00008169.htm>; Denney, Robert E., *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 109.

⁴⁷ National Archives and Records Administration, microfilm library. Series M319 roll 43, "Compiled service records of Confederate Soldiers who served in Organizations from Kentucky," 7th Cav. Su-Z, 8th Cav. A-Bo.

shipwreck that spilled a large cargo of peas on the slightly raised area. The peas flourished, collecting earth in their roots and slowly developing an island around them.⁴⁸

The patch of muddy earth had held a place in local history since the late 1700s, when Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant stumbled upon the low-lying island and decided it would be an ideal place to erect a defensive fortification. The United States military latched onto the idea quickly but followed through slowly. The War of 1812 brought new talk of fortifying the island for defense, but a stalemate within the military bureaucracy held planning and construction at bay until Christmas of 1814, shortly before the war ended.⁴⁹

The military continued its plans for construction because of its prime location and sent the first of several engineers, Captain Thomas Clark, to oversee the building of wharves and dikes, and to begin fortifying the island. Work continued over the next several years, with Captain Samuel Babcock assigned to the Pea Patch Island project in 1819 as head engineer.⁵⁰

Throughout the teens and twenties of the nineteenth century, progress on the island moved along at an acceptable pace. In 1824, the first group of soldiers garrisoned the island, although the fortress was unfinished. The construction crew completed barracks for the men three years later. In 1831, a fire burned everything but the stone works, and for more than a decade thereafter, the island remained inhospitable, covered in the charred remains of what should have been the greatest fort on the Delaware.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Fetzer and Mowday. *Unlikely Allies*, 2.

⁴⁹ Fetzer and Mowday. *Unlikely Allies*, 1,3.

⁵⁰ Fetzer and Mowday. *Unlikely Allies*, 8.

⁵¹ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 9-11.

In 1848 the military assigned yet another engineer to the project, Brevet Major John Sanders, and work began again. The destruction left in the fire's wake required much labor before construction could move forward on the fortress. Among Major Sanders' first tasks was an enumeration of salvageable materials from the site. Only forty-two thousand feet of timber remained of the original two hundred-fifty thousand, while most of the brick and stone from the first attempt were still usable. After establishing these details, Sanders began work on the new fort, utilizing plans redrawn by Colonel Joseph Totten. During the seventeen or so lapsed years, military officials had time to rethink the fort's original design and learn from mistakes made in the previous attempt. The new plan seemed a better design for a stable fort on such low-lying, marsh-like ground.⁵²

In 1851, aid came for Sanders in the form of Brevet Captain George B. McClellan, who served as assistant project engineer during that summer. A year later, in May of 1852, Sanders and his men finally completed one part of the project. After three years of steady work, they had completed the fortress's foundation. Due to marshy conditions and low ground, creating space for a stable foundation required ingenuity and skill as well as time. Also, engineers needed means for regulating the river's tidal conditions in order to keep the island from being swamped daily.⁵³

During construction, workers and their families—several hundred people—constituted a community of sorts, a prototype of life on Pea Patch for years to come. The community grew to include all the necessities of town life, including a schoolteacher and a small hospital with a civilian surgeon. By 1856, Pea Patch evidenced some of that era's

⁵² Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 17-19.

⁵³ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 20-21.

most modern facilities. Flush toilets, rainwater collection systems to keep fresh water available, cisterns for water storage, and a sewer system running on the tidal fluctuations of the Delaware River all contributed to this “modern marvel of military engineering.”⁵⁴

At the close of the 1850s, Fort Delaware stood ready to defend her country against any enemy onslaught. Its fate, however, lay in a far different direction than anyone had predicted.⁵⁵

The first rumblings of secession caused a great deal of turmoil in Delaware. While the state’s slave population numbered only one for every ten residents, secession debates grew quite heated. Southern tradition held its ground throughout the state, especially (perhaps understandably) in the southern portion. Unrest became the over-riding theme of the times, as no one knew to which side Delaware would turn.⁵⁶

The debate in three other states in similar positions created quite a stir in Washington early in Lincoln’s presidency. Kentucky and Missouri also tottered on the brink of secession, but Lincoln advocated a “hands-off” policy regarding their position in the Union. The people of these two states could continue to foster their Southern sympathies if they wished. Maryland and Delaware were different stories as the domestic situation intensified.⁵⁷

Due to geography, both Maryland and Delaware remained important to the Union at the war’s onset. Lincoln knew he had to retain them in the Union for the United States’ cause to succeed. The situation in Maryland escalated rapidly, with localized demonstrations against the war taking place. Just after the war began, demonstrations

⁵⁴ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 24-30.

⁵⁵ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 30.

⁵⁶ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 32, 47.

⁵⁷ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 32-33.

against Union troops marching through caused President Lincoln to use a little-known Presidential power to control the population. Due to the divided citizenry and the resultant bloodshed, he subjected Maryland to martial law in mid-1861 and held it in the Union by force.⁵⁸

Although initially Delaware's outlook was grim as well, incidents there occurred far less frequently and far less destructively and it voluntarily remained a Union state. While Pea Patch Island hosted a community of civilian workers plus Fort Delaware's garrisoned soldiers, commandant Captain Augustus A. Gibson remained unsure of her purpose as war commenced. With the rocky situation around him, Gibson had to prepare his battalion for possible action and protect his island fortress against possible attack and takeover by agitated local citizenry. Gibson was not the only one considering the fort's future. The region's unrest resulted in an overabundance of prisoners of state, whom the government housed at Fort Delaware from late 1861. Major General John A. Dix, superintendent of the Military District of Pennsylvania and commandant of the prison at Fort McHenry, saw the perfect opportunity to decrease his prison's population. On July 10, 1861, Dix suggested that the War Department use Fort Delaware as a holding place for prisoners held for treason. In September, Dix again made his request, this time to commanding general George McClellan, making a strong case for the use of Fort Delaware as a prison site.⁵⁹

During the summer and autumn of 1861, Fort Delaware remained quite a tourist attraction. Captain Gibson contributed to the community's aura, encouraging education with a library that housed over five thousand volumes. Along with community

⁵⁸ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 33.

⁵⁹ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 41-43.

development, however, came the less-than-stellar facets of Fort Delaware's architectural design. Flaws in the original plan became evident over time, especially in the sewer system. The use of tidal flows seemed quite ingenious, and in fact made good use of nature's own tools, but Pea Patch's low elevation and varying tidal rates kept the holding areas for waste products partially filled. Over time, this contaminant seeped into five of the twenty-one fresh water cisterns located beneath the fort. This seepage greatly increased the incidence of illness on the island.

Along with this problem came that of climate. Pea Patch temperature often varied greatly from those of the mainland due to sea breezes, and within Fort Delaware summer temperatures could soar above one hundred degrees. When coupled with the lack of cleanliness, these facts provided a recipe for illness. Advances in medicine over the past decades brought with them an awareness of cleanliness and sanitation, but people were very slow in implementing changes. New regulations regarding the fort and its environs, especially for water usage, helped stem the rising tide of disease after the Fort's first year.⁶⁰

That same summer of 1861 the first prisoners of war arrived at the fort. Five men captured at the battle of Bull Run entered Fort Delaware in July, 1861. Steadily the numbers increased over the next several months. By the spring of 1862, many new prisoners had arrived, along with five new companies of heavy artillery assigned to guard the fort. Because Delaware came under martial law in late 1861 and early 1862, many of these prisoners came as prisoners of state.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 50, 72.

⁶¹ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 51.

As 1862 marched on, more and more prisoners of war found themselves incarcerated on Pea Patch Island. Fort Delaware officially became a prisoner of war camp that spring, with regulations and operating protocol in place for the camp's management. At this point in the war, prisoner treatment, at least at Fort Delaware, reflected the social mores of the time. Confederate officers held as prisoners still received the respect due their station and often had enlisted Federals serving as personal "servants." The Federals guarding the fort looked on all prisoners as men worthy of honor and respect. This sense of human worth appears even in the ration allotments: one pound of fresh beef and one pound of salt beef, as well as generous amounts of coffee, sugar, and flour. Prisoners also received candles daily for their rooms.⁶²

Commandant Gibson and those above him in the Federal government found themselves with unusual power. Because Army regulations contained only three specific regulations regarding prisoner of war policy, those in charge often created policy as needed. While these policies specified treatment for deserters or traitors, those commanding the prisoner of war centers often had no idea how to deal generally with the men in their care.⁶³

Due to its innovative construction, Fort Delaware remained an enigma as far as large numbers of prisoners were concerned. When, in the summer of 1862, the prison filled to capacity, Gibson and his head engineer Edward Muhlenbruch scrambled to solve the overcrowding; the limited space available hindered new construction on the island. The military hierarchy did not share Gibson's view of Fort Delaware. Upon hearing Gibson's objections to more prisoners, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and

⁶² Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 59-61.

⁶³ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 61.

Commissary General of Prisons William Hoffman immediately issued a rebuttal. The Army's Quartermaster General, Montgomery Meigs, ordered barracks for two thousand prisoners built. They were completed by the end of that May. Because of the fort's constricted surface area, these lodgings had to be built outside the fort's walls but "under its guns."⁶⁴

Both the leadership and the number of prisoners fluctuated dramatically during the second half of 1862 and into 1863 over these years as exchanges and paroles constantly brought new prisoners and removed long-time residents. Often during this time, Fort Delaware prisoners had already been paroled and were simply waiting to be exchanged. A series of relatively poor leaders gave way to the final commandant of Fort Delaware, Brigadier General Albin Francisco Schoepf, on April 17, 1863. Schoepf came to America after several years in the Austrian Army. Hardworking, he spent several years building a good reputation and fine connections, leading to his appointment as brigadier general of volunteers at the war's onset. His leadership capabilities opened the door for his posting at Fort Delaware.⁶⁵

Over the course of 1863, thousands of Confederate soldiers entered Fort Delaware's gates. Beaten and down-trodden by combat, disease, and capture, these Southerners arrived utterly devastated. By July, 12,595 prisoners made Fort Delaware their home. The Dix-Hill Cartel bordered on the verge of collapse, stifling hopes for exchange and leaving the number of prisoners at the fort high and stagnant.⁶⁶

In late 1863, smallpox invaded the fort. Hundreds of prisoners died of the disease during that fall and winter. The recently discovered smallpox vaccine was not available in

⁶⁴ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 63.

⁶⁵ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 78,94.

⁶⁶ Fetzer and Mowday. *Unlikely Allies*, 101-108.

the South, though Northern soldiers received inoculations prior to or upon entering the service, and very few succumbed to the disease. Between August and December, the average death rate reached three percent of the total prisoner population, and nearly half of all war-time deaths at Fort Delaware occurred during that period. After the epidemic, prison officials inoculated all prisoners upon entry into the camp from that point until the war's close.⁶⁷

Into this setting, Ambrose arrived in March, 1864. Guards searched the newcomers upon arrival, rifling through the limited goods each possessed. Prisoners could keep most of their belongings with confiscations limited to weaponry and money. Once searched, the men in gray were taken the barracks built to house them. One young Confederate discussed sleeping arrangements in his diary, describing three-tiered bunk beds lining each room's walls. While each room contained windows, the top bunks sat above them, creating plenty of competition for the lower two levels.⁶⁸

Throughout the spring of 1864, the number of prisoners increased dramatically until the population reached sixteen thousand. At the same time, the Dix-Hill Cartel completely collapsed, leaving prisoners (and their guards) no recourse for relief. Again the companies guarding and running the fort scrambled to find room in which to house the incoming Confederates. In spite of increasingly uncomfortable confines, life on the island continued at its normal pace. A community atmosphere developed as men entered and left the compound.⁶⁹

Southerners certainly knew how to enjoy themselves, and those imprisoned at Fort Delaware proved no exception. By the summer of 1864, prison society reflected that

⁶⁷ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 117-119.

⁶⁸ Tom Jenkins Journal, July 11, 1863. Excerpted in Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 107.

⁶⁹ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 121.

of home, with a debate club, chess club, theatrical club, and poetry society all contributing to the men's lives. Business also flourished, as men skilled in handiwork plied their former trades throughout the camp. Even with such diversions at their fingertips, low rations, heat, humidity, and disease all provided constant reminders of their lot in life. While the Pea Patch hospital certainly offered better care than that available to many soldiers during the war, the fear of death – compounded by a high death rate among those who sought hospital treatment – kept a majority of Fort Delaware prisoners out of the hospital until they could find no alternative. This alone accelerated the rate of disease and illness, as the island's wet heat acted as an incubator for germs. Even Ambrose fell ill, spending nearly a week in the Fort Delaware hospital, January 7 to January 12, 1865. No record remains of his illness, but some information suggests that he had small pox.⁷⁰

During the spring of 1865, things began to look up for some of the Southern men held at Fort Delaware. Both Northerners and Southerners realized the war was quickly coming to a close, and while disheartened by their defeat, the Southern prisoners, including Ambrose, waited in anticipation for the day they could go home. In early March, Ambrose received his parole, probably the most beautiful piece of paper he had ever seen. After a short stop-over for processing in Richmond, he arrived back home in Kentucky.

⁷⁰ Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 121-122; Fort Delaware Society Office Manager, information received in an email, July 13, 2004.

Appendices

Appendix 1

**Joseph Scrivner Ambrose's Letters
written to Nannie Hathaway Ambrose Dawley
between August 1863 and March 1865**

Ohio State Prison, Augst. 17th 1863

My Dear Sister,

I received your letter tis [sic] morning and promptness being the chief characteristic of my nature, I will answer it without delay. I am nearly entirely well again. I began to talk this morning for the first so all is right now and I am getting along swimmingly⁷¹, The first thing that strikes my mind is to inform you that I have swaped [sic] off my slim face to a round fat one something that I have neglected to tell you, last winter I weighed 180 lbs I weigh now at my thinnest [sic] stage 150 lbs next [?] weight, so you see that I am not very puny, you spoke of sending me money. I don't know that I stand much in need of that article at present, We are permitted [sic] to receive most anything that our friends see fit to express to us unless it is contraband such as out clothing newspapers weapons Pocket Knives &c these articles we cannot receive⁷² But money, post Stamps underclothing and articles of that nature are not prohibited, we are also allowed to receive Minitures [sic] Photographs, etc, etc, You said that you were in hope that I would be able to procure medicine, well you will be able to judge for yourself, when I tell you that my cell presents a sriking [sic] appearance of a modern vilage [sic] drug-store I have a host of vials Tin Boxes, paper, bones, &c. on my little shelf which has been groaning under the heavy wealth of Medisons [sic] for several weeks, I wrote to

⁷¹ Often, due to exposure and lack of supplies, food, and medicine, Confederate soldiers were already in very poor shape before being captured. Upon capture, they were subject to harsh conditions in traveling to their respective prison sites. It was said that if one was able to survive the first two weeks of internment, one had a good likelihood of surviving the prison. Denney, Robert E., *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 12.

⁷² According to an early history of the Ohio State Penitentiary, generous privileges may have been allowed the war prisoners immediately upon arrival, however most likely due to lax discipline and exploitation of given freedoms General Burnside issued an order to prison warden Captain Nathaniel Merion, dated August 4, 1863, that "Hereafter no permits will be granted to visit the prisoners under your charge. No clothing will be allowed unless it be a reasonable amount of underclothing. No boots, hats, caps, or pants. All letters must be examined and approved by you before they are allowed to go in. This order is positive and no deviations will be made from it." Dyer, *The Ohio Penitentiary Annex and Prisoners*, 65.

Miss Cyrena Pinkstin⁷³ more than one week ago. I wish in your next letter that you would inform me where you wish your letter directed to, I think that Shugar Creek is the proper office for there you have 3 Mails a week while at Napoleon⁷⁴ you have but one, and I think it rather uncertain, I received a letter from Warsaw this morning Tell Brother Clem⁷⁵ or T. Pinkstin that I have a very nice watch chain and my Masonic seal somewhere in Ky. And if they or either of them will go to see Miss Maggie Hughes⁷⁶ she will put them on the trail of it, the gentlemen agreed to send it to Warsaw and I presume has forgotten it.

J.S. Ambrose

P.S. Tender my Love to all Friends I think that they might all write to me,

Ohio State Prison Augst 25th 1863

My Dear Sister, I wrote to Brother to [illegible] Send me Ten dollars which I presume he will do. I have stated to you that all articles sent to me should be sent by Express there is an express office in Warsaw that is a

⁷³ Syrena Pinkston was the eldest daughter of Thomas M. (whom Ambrose later in his letters refers to as “brother in law”) and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Pinkston. Elizabeth was Joseph’s oldest sister, born September 12, 1827. United States Census records, 1860, Gallatin Co, KY; accessed online via <www.Ancestry.com> May 26, 2005.

⁷⁴ This letter was sent to Mrs. Nannie H. Dawley, Napoleon, Gallatin Co., KY; many other are sent care of Sugar Creek, Gallatin Co., KY. The only Sugar Creek listed in the Kentucky State archives was in Ballard County. Sugar Creek was the name of the post office there. Robert M. Rennick, *Kentucky Place Names*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984.) 180, 287. However, there was a listing in the Kentucky State Gazetteer from 1876 of a small village in central Gallatin County known as Sugar Creek, with a population of twelve. With Ballard County being on the other side of the state from Gallatin, it makes sense that this small hamlet would be the one to which Ambrose refers, rather than the post office listing in Ballard County. Archived Kentucky State Gazetteer accessed online at <www.nkyviews.com/gallatin/gallatin_gaz_sugarcreek.htm> 5/18/2005

⁷⁵ Clement Roger, the third Ambrose child, born April 14, 1830.

⁷⁶ Possibly 17 year old Maggie Hughes of Hancock County, Kentucky, the daughter of Miles and E. Hughes.

good ways from your house Twenty miles ride there and back or nearly so.⁷⁷ And further more it will cost you – no doubt several dollars to make the trip, well we have been here now nearly one month⁷⁸, Time waits not, but it will roll its weary lengths along whether we enjoy it or not, during all this time I have received pretty light treatment from my correspondence. I have received but 3 letters, I wish you all would join together and Bake some good bread and boil 2 or 3 nice hams Box them up together with various other articles, it is not worth while for me to mention all of them. You must be your own judge, but put in nothing that is contraband, such as brandy whiskey &c, but a few cans of Peaches and a can of Preserves would be admitted and I am confident would go remarkable well with a pone of homemade cake⁷⁹ Nearly every officer here has received something of this kind and of course I do not wish to be totally neglected, and furthermore we get but one kind of bread here⁸⁰ and a change would add to my comfort greatly, we are requested to wright [sic] short letters so I must speak of something else, I am enjoying very good health at this time, I believe that I will get fleshy if I am kept in the pen all winter I am confident that I can eat a sufficient quantly [sic] Should you conclude to send me a box of Provisions get Ma to send me 2 par of yarn socks and a bottle of Honey to mix with vinegar I think it will be the best thing for me when I take

⁷⁷ Express coaches during the mid-1800s often traveled at speeds of up to 4 miles per hour on the best of roads. The smaller country roads and family buggy used in this case probably meant travel took much longer. This trip conceivably took two days to complete, or one extremely long day. Helen Reeder Cross, *Life in Lincoln's America*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1964.), 57.

⁷⁸ According to records from the National Archives and Records Administration, Ambrose was captured at Cheshire, Ohio, on July 20, 1863. After being processed through the Depot of Prisoners of War at Sandusky, Ohio, he was sent to Columbus on August 1, 1863, by order of General Burnside. National Archives and Records Administration microfilm registry, received from NARA March 2005.

⁷⁹ Most likely Ambrose refers to cornbread (corn pone or “Johnny cake,” as it was also known) in this reference. Helen Reeder Cross, *Life in Lincoln's America*, 28.

⁸⁰ References from other northern prisons indicate bread rations were fairly simple and basic. Reports from the South obviously harbor greater resentment towards the rations, but both Northern and Southern reports indicate whatever bread was available tended to be fresh and relatively generous. “How They Feed Confederate Soldiers at Fort Delaware.” *The Charleston Mercury*, November 2, 1864. Accessed online through Library of Congress databases 5/26/2005.

<www.accessible.com/accessible/text/civilwar/00000105/00010544.htm>; Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 124-125.

cold I know that it is good for hoarseness; The vinegar we have inside here in an abundance, Give my compliments to all Friends, I cannot describe the Prison to you in this letter, Write often I am devotedly your Brother and wish always to be remembered,

J.S.Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

P.S.I wrote to you last week I have received one letter from Dear Maggie I answered it but have not received an answer if I can get money enough I can send you the autograph of every officer in here which probably will interest you should you see dear Maggie give her my undivided Love, They will not allow us to write love letter, when you write do not write more than half of a sheet and speak nothing about Politicks [sic]⁸¹ or they will not allow us to receive them. give my Love to Ma & Pa and all of my Brothers and Sisters, express no uneasiness for me, for I am as firm as the rock of ages, tell all of my Brothers to stay at home with their families for war is unpleasant but if they are compelled to fight then come out for Principal. I am J.S.Ambrose

if you send me these articles send them as soon as convenient. Send me also in the Box a few good novels if you have them but send no News-papers for they are contraband.⁸²

Tell Miss Cyrena⁸³ that it is time she was answering my letters, if I could only see you I could amuse you for a long time telling the history of the war

⁸¹ All incoming and outgoing prisoner mail underwent inspection and could be censored by the smallest reference to the war or compromising information regarding the prison situation itself. Correspondence was limited to immediate family members, and although Ambrose limits his sister to half a sheet, other correspondents mention a limit of two pages for incoming mail, while prisoners were limited to one page. Letter, Samuel Burks Taylor to sister, dated October 1, 1863. Ohio Historical Society Archives; B. F. Dyer, *The Ohio Penitentiary Annex and Prisoners*. (Columbus: Ohio Penitentiary Print, 1891.) 65.

⁸² Captain Nathaniel Merion, warden of the Ohio State Penitentiary, to General J. H. Morgan, regarding newspapers for Morgan and his men while they were held captive, “[newspapers] will not be allowed inside the prison under any circumstance.” B. F. Dyer, *The Ohio Penitentiary Annex and Prisoners*, 65.

⁸³ Again, probably referring to Syrena Pinkston, who, as family, would have been able to send letters to Ambrose. He misspells this name throughout his letters, but seems to be referring to the same girl in each.

State Prison Columbus Ohio Sept 10th 1863

My Dear Sister

With greatfulness [sic] I acknowledge the receipt of the contents of the Box you expressed to me, The Five Dollars Brother sent me was received some days since, and for the present I feel indisposed to trouble you more, I am quite well, talk as glib as ever, but like old uncle Jerry Todd, could not sing a tune if it was the only article called for, This is my favorite Season, I really admire autumn, not altogether because it is the fruitful luxuriating season. I adore it for its meloncoly calm serene beauty, it is such an hour for meditation. How many castles have been reared in imagination, in calm thinking autumn, to be shattered and destroyed by the cold, ungovernable gusts of winter, So fare as I am, capable of judging, this is real pleasant outdoor weather. Of course we never get long doses of it now-day [sic], though we feast rather sumptuously upon the small scraps of sunshine that steals in through the windows to take a peep at Morgan and his officers, and are flanked and devoured before having time to escape. Give Ma my undiminished love, I shall ask no clothing from her at present. Kiss all the Gall Babys [sic] for me, from the age of 20 years and under. What has become of Miss Allie, Violet? You never speak of her Give her my compliments, Hoping to hear from you shortly I am with proper devotion your Brother

J.S.Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

Ohio State Prison Oct 9th 1863

My Dearly beloved Sister,

I received your letter of 2nd inst.⁸⁴ to day and am answering it impromptu. I was really delighted to hear from you, Epistolary communiations [sic] are the only source of gratification tendered to us unfortunate beings, it is a calm retreat for the wearied thoughts a light that shines in darkness _ an oasis in a dreary desert _ it is soul inervating, the delight of the heart inexpressible by words, it is the tuchstone [sic] to

⁸⁴ This abbreviation occurs frequently in correspondence from this period of time, standing for the word "instant." In correspondence it stands for "the current month," in this case the 2nd of this month, October.

prison happiness, the only reliable source of present enjoyment, _ Then do not delay writing, do not covit [sic] the few moment spent in offering comfort to those who so highly appreciate it. Moments are fleeting and comparatively soon we must all quit this tenement of clay and appear before the judge of the great tribunal, Then Oh! Horrible thought, that we have not done all that it was our duty to do to relieve the confined and distressed, __ I am not making complaint for my friends have done more for me than I deserve, and my heart asketh nothing further, I received a letter some two weeks since from my Niece Cyrena, she said not answer that for she would write again soon, I have not as yet received anything more from her, she might have writen [sic], I presume that I would not be permitted to receive her letter for we now are not permitted [sic] to write to or receive letters from any persons but Parents, Brothers, Sisters and wife the latter I have not, This you see cuts the correspondence between Cousin M _____⁸⁵ of Warsaw and myself, I sent her the Autographs of the officers herein confined,⁸⁶ if you see her ascertain wheather [sic] or not she received them and please inform me in one of you letters give her my love and compliments for she is a very dear cousin to me, Furthermore I am limited to one page of letter paper whilst those who write to me have the privolege [sic] of writing two pages of letter paper, when you write give me the changes of the neighborhood and also if there is anything wrong going on at Warsaw ____ Give my love and compliments to all of my Relations especially My Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, they do not expect me to write seperate [sic] Letters to each of them, but my love for them is insurpassible [sic] My thoughts dwell upon my beloved Parents more than all others, Oh! how I would love to see them but greatly fear that we will never meet again this side of eternity, but my prayer to God is that we may all be prepared to meet on the banks of sweet deliverence [sic] where wars and death can part us no more, Write as soon as you receive this, I am in tolerable good health,

I am Devotedly your Brother

⁸⁵ Possibly the cousin Maggie mentioned earlier. References to a young lady Ambrose may have been courting occur throughout his letters, and this young Maggie seems to be a likely candidate for those affections.

⁸⁶ Many men in prison kept small diaries or journals in which they collected the signatures of the men with whom they were confined. Ambrose's own signature occurs in General Morgan's autograph book. (Ohio State Historical Society Archives)

J.S.Ambrose

Capt. C.S.Army

Ohio State Prison Oct 27th 1863

My well beloved Sister

Your letter of Oct 17th mailed Oct 22nd accompanied by one also from Brother Harvey⁸⁷, cast anchor today in the harbor of the Ohio Penitentiary, _ I wrote a letter to Sister Mary⁸⁸ and one also to you last week, consequently I shall not answer Brothers this week as I cannot write it in time to reach Warsaw before Thursday, You are well apprised of the fact that unless all Letters destined to Napoleon reach Warsaw⁸⁹ before Thursday that they lay over there one week and I fear that this will not reach there in time _ But I have just now noticed that you desire your letters directed to Sugar Creek, My Dear Sister I hope that you did not construe the tone of my other letter into a series of reprimands, It was not so intended I can assure you, You ask if there is any chance to see me, Apply to Gen. McClain, Commanding at Cincinnati,⁹⁰ Prove your loyalty, gain his permission and I presume you will have no difficulty in seeing me. Your Loyalty you can establish no doubt without difficulty but I think you will find some trouble in gaining his permission, though it will cost but little to make the effort, and unless you could succeed in getting me Paroled one or two days with the privilege [sic] of the city⁹¹ it would not afforde [sic] you much satisfaction to see me for only a few minutes, But I would be delighted to see any of you if it was only for one moment, Make the effort and should

⁸⁷ Ambrose's older brother James Harvey, born June 25, 1833.

⁸⁸ The youngest of the Ambrose clan, Hannah Mary, born January 8, 1841.

⁸⁹ Napoleon and Warsaw are both towns in the northern Kentucky county of Gallatin.

⁹⁰ There is no information readily available on a General McClain serving on either side during the Civil War. However, there are several references to a Lieutenant Colonel (later promoted to Colonel) Richard W. McClain, commanding the 51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry from 1861 to 1864. United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), I.16.II.593.

⁹¹ This type of parole was a special privilege occasionally granted to officers, which gave them a few days leave in the town in which they were held. This is not the same as parole in anticipation of being exchanged.

you succeed, notify me as soon as you arrive in Columbus,⁹² Though you need not come without Proper permission for a great many have come here to see their Friends and returned without seeing them _ I am enjoying good health at present and am pleased to learn that you are all well, as to my health it has been improving every since [sic] I have been here and I am looking as well now as you ever saw, I will write to Brother in a few days Give my Love and best wishes to all my real Friends, My purest devotion to Pa & Ma, __ I had heard of wedding at W⁹³, but do not hear from there now days (wish I could) Write again soon, Tell Cyrene to write to me in place of her mother,

I am Devotionally your Brother

J.S. Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

Ohio State Prison Nov 17th 1863

My Dear Sister

Your letter of 10th Inast [sic]; has just been placed to my care. I have carefully perused it and am now endeavoring [sic] to answer it. I deem it quite unnecessary for any of you to loose time to make an effort to see me while I remain in this Prison, But if I have thought seriously of asking Pa to use his influence with Colonel Landram to procure in a Parole until I can be exchanged at which time (that is as soon as I am exchanged) I fully intend to resign and quit the service, The reason I make this request is that this winter confinement will doubtless prove very depreting [sic] to my already impaired constitution, so if I could only be Paroled (a very reasonable request) until I am exchanged [sic] it would be a source of great relief, But do not even hint this to Pa unless you think he will willingly exert his influence in my behalf, for I would rather suffer and die than to bring trouble upon my beloved Parent, I know his thoughts are not on worldly affairs, then I will be remembered in his prayers, I am pleased to ascertain that

⁹² The Penitentiary was located in Ohio's capital city, Columbus.

⁹³ Probably Warsaw.

you are enjoying a good meeting at our old Church⁹⁴, I very much wish your dream could be realised [sic] I have received one letter only from ___ [illegible] Marshall and have answered it, No my Dear Sister I do not request you to write to M.⁹⁵ you are situated so you know best and I would have you do nothing that your own judgement [sic] does not dictate, you say that probably it would not be agreeable, likely you know something that justifies you in so saying I know not, Write soon give my Love to Ma, Pa, and all my Relations & Friends, And believe me ever Devotedly your Brother

J.S. Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

State Prison Columbus Ohio Dec 1st 1863

My Dear Sister,

Your's mailed Warsaw Nov 26th was placed to my care some fifteen minutes ago, also one from sister Lizza⁹⁶, I will answer them both without delay. Speaking of clothing, I have just written to Brother Harvey⁹⁷ concerning the articles I need, but will repeat them in this letter, viz: a full suit of Gray or blue ___ and two flannel shirts, make them to fit Brother Clements (I am some larger round the chest than

⁹⁴ With their father ministering at several churches throughout their lives, it is difficult to pinpoint to which exactly Ambrose is referring. Their father started Concord Church in Gallatin County in 1855, which might fit, if Nannie and her husband were still living in Gallatin. However, because the church was started so soon before the war, it also seems possible that Ambrose was referring to a church from earlier in their lives. The family history also shows Joseph Ambrose III ministering at Elk Lick Church in Owsley County for seventeen years, although he moved with his wife and children to Estill County in 1833. According to the dates, it would appear he continued to minister at Elk Lick even after they moved, being ordained in 1827 and subsequently serving seventeen years at Elk Lick. (Dawley family history)

⁹⁵ Probably the young lady Ambrose has been courting, most likely the Maggie referenced previously.

⁹⁶ His sister Elizabeth Pinkston.

⁹⁷ James Harvey, the fifth Ambrose child, born June 25, 1833.

he is) though we are nearly the same hight [sic] – have them made according to fashion.⁹⁸ Send them in as small paper (or any kind of) box as convenient Express under the same directions that you send your letter, Request Pa for my sake to cease his efforts in my behalf Provided he meets with the slightest repulse in his frist [sic] attempt and be sure and do nothing that will imperil his own loyalty, for I should never Parden [sic] my self were I knowingly to bring the slightest trouble of that nature upon my Worthy Parent I feel it due to him and all my Friends to bear if possible all the trouble (if trouble it be) of my own folly and I feel Physically as well as mentally able to bear a great deal, My health at present (with the exeption [sic] of a slight cold which is of insignificant importance) is remarably [sic] good. – I do not need any more money at present. I will notify you in the future in regard to my pecuniary desires, I only regret that I am driven to the needcessity [sic] of having to molest you in that respect at all, I see from letters received by our officers here that a great many of our men have died at Camp Duglas [sic], Ill, if you are aware that any of my company has been so unfortunate please inform (in your next or any subsequent letters) who he is, I have no other way of finding out only through correspondence from home⁹⁹ You say that there is nothing wrong with Ma, I hope not! but there has been profound silence in that direction for some time, This is the first day of winter and it is not slack in the performance of its duties, for it is really cold I presume this is two degrees North of where you are So if you remember the day you can draw an idea of the intense coldness.

⁹⁸ For some time, officials in both the North and South had debated the protocol of prisoners receiving articles of clothing and other goods from friends and family. Uppermost in their minds was the concern that prisoners could use especially the clothing as a means of escape, if they received civilian wear. On November 23, 1863, the Federal Commissary-General of Prisoners in the North, Colonel William Hoffman, wrote to Brigadier General Gilman Marston, the commander of the prison at Point Lookout, Maryland, notifying him of a new protocol for such issues. “Hereafter prisoners of war may be permitted to receive clothing or other articles only from member of their immediate family. Contributions by disloyal friends or sympathizers for the general benefit of prisoners must not be received.” Denney, Robert E., *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 122.

⁹⁹ A cursory overview of NARA records showed no men from the 8th Kentucky Cavalry passed away in Camp Douglas, Ill., up to this date. However, that does not mean there were none. Some records are very scattered, others difficult to read after so many years, and some very limited in scope.

My Dear sister you have been a prompt correspondent will you do me the honor to continue so? Concerning my faith (Religiously) I refer you to Paul's letter to Philemon 22nd vs¹⁰⁰, Hebrews Chapt 10th beginning at the 22nd and continuing to the 27th vs included¹⁰¹ - This is the night of the 2nd Dec circumstances over which I had no control prevented my finishing this letter the day I commenced it, Will you write immediately upon the reception of this and let me know how goes the times.

Distribute my love and highest regards (with) Profusely and ever
Remember

J.S. Ambrose

Capt C.S.Army

Prisoner of War

Ohio State Prison Dec 6th 1863

M___ Dear Sister,

Your letter of 3rd Inst. I received today I wrote to you only a few days since, but with gladness avail my-self of the opportunity of writing again and the only difference between myself and the boy that knew but two songs (is in his favor) he knew two songs I know but one (practically speaking) and I sing that every time and to every body – my letters eminating [sic] from the same suppressed fountain run in the same cannel [sic], My comparison is rather obtuse, but you no doubt can comprehend it. You have all been very kind to make the effert [sic] to get me paroled, though unsuccessful, nevertheless I am under obligations to you as lasting, as if you had overwhelmingly gain'd your point – Let the matter ever rest! And we'll seek to amuse ourselves with

¹⁰⁰ Philemon 22 – “But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.” (King James Version)

¹⁰¹ Hebrews 10:22-27 – “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” (King James Version)

topics of more interest, Do you remember having ever heard me speak of my friend, Miss Bettie Lane of Lawrenceburg¹⁰²? I am pained to record the lamentable fact of her cecease [sic] she died Friday 27th Nov, in the Twentieth year of her age, Death is no respecter of person! All ages alike fall a victim to his touch! No period from infancy to old age, (~~that~~) secure from his power! No place so secret as to be shut out from his search! This inerrant, - if not legal – always good and when issued, its victim is sure to be apprehended, Then the all absorbing question with us, should be are we ready for the Trial! Rest assured! Our casses [sic] are all docketid [sic] and will be called sooner or later You speak of having over exerted yourself, Let me importune you to take care of your health, how many persons die daily of puelmonic [sic] affection¹⁰³? Which is the offspring of cold and fatigue, you have a family, you have an affectionate husband and dear son to live for, Different with me, I am alone in the world and if, as some very wise poetic Gentleman has said: “We are but vessels upon the Ocean of Time” – I can truly say that I have sailed but little upon the smoothe [sic] surface, in sunshine but have stemed [sic] many a storm, have ridden the waves in their wildest fury? Frequently cast upon a sand-bar, Often shipwrecked, not a few times foundered, and now with main and top gallant sails swept away Helmet crashed rudder broken, Bow stove in, Stern in danger, have cast anchor in (if not the quietest) one of the most secure Harbors in the United States, and as yet have made no repairs, Excuse my nonsense [sic], Devotedly your Brother

J.S. Ambrose

C.S.A.

Ohio State Prison, Dec. 17th/63

My Dear Sister,

Your letter of the 13th Inst. was received today & received also one from Sis. Lizzie, which I cannot answer (owing to circumstance with which you are unacquainted) before the first of next week, I have, I believe, received all the letters you have written to me, and I here assure you that I answered every one of them promptly,

¹⁰² Probably Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, the seat of Anderson County, Ambrose's home.

¹⁰³ Pulmonic affections. Another way of referring to lung ailments (pulmonary diseases).

and am much disconcerted to ascertain that you have not received them, Concerning the clothing I began early in the fall in order to possess them by the approach of winter, I have written four letter [sic] under the administration of different Instructors – after first acquiring their permission describing _____ the articles needed and detailing necessary particulars [sic], and it is evident that you have not received either of them, I do not pretend to presume why! but for the present, I will settle the clothing question by requesting you to take no more notice of them (the clothing). I am pleased to enform you that the money of which you speak has been placed to my account, - I need no more of that article for awhile, I well knew that Colonel L _____¹⁰⁴ [sic] had it not in his immediate power to grant me a parole, I merely solicited [his?] influence with the proper Functionaries, I am satisfied with your failure to enlist said influence in my behalf and beg of you to accommodate me by not mentioning it to him again, I am very glad to receive Cousin Emillie's Love and Esteem, and as you always keep on hands a supply of my love bottled up for immediate use in cases of immergency, you will please send her a few drops to compensate her for her kindness, and enform her that I cannot write to her, You well know that my Love flows copiously for my Dear Parents Brothers and Sisters and what I write to one is equally intended for the ears of all, I find after counseling with my day-book that I received a letter form you and one from Sis Lizzie, Dec 1st – also one from you Dec 6th after you had been to see Col. L _____ shows also, as above stated, that they were promptly answered, My health is very good at this time, Give my Regards to all Friends, Tell Sis Mary E¹⁰⁵ that I received a letter from her on the 7th ist. I answered it the Same day, Write Soon and Remember me, Your Brother,

Joseph S. Ambrose

¹⁰⁴ Most likely the Colonel Landram mentioned earlier.

¹⁰⁵ His biological sister's name was Hannah Mary. This probably refers to James Harvey's wife Mary Elizabeth Dawley Ambrose. The two were married December 22, 1859. (Dawley family Bible records)

Ohio State Prison, Dec. 31st, 1863

My Dearly Beloved Sister,

Your letter of 22nd inst. was rec'd 25th. Our Brother in law, Pinkston¹⁰⁶ accompanied it, also some clothing which I received, In the exuberance of your kindness, you confined upon me an estimable and highly appretiated [sic] favor, I had not the opportunity to answer your letter in order to send it by Pinkston, and knowing (although he did not see me) that he could give you, all the then existing news, I have defered [sic] writing until to night – the close of 1863, yes the old year, with its snowy lock is venging upon the brink of old times grave, Let it pass away! For it has been one of the most destructive to Human existence, that Historians have ever been summoned to promulgate and will doubtless long obtrude upon the memory of its survivors! I wonder if the ensuing one will be as inhumane and destructive to the fallen sinful race of Father Adam! Alas! I fear it will. You speak prospectively of weddings, I make no objections how many, provided one certain one of the tribe of Old lady Eve, is not one of the Brides, That certain one will do well, I think, to await the terminus of the war, what think you?¹⁰⁷ There is nothing of interest transpiring within these huge walls and if there were, you would not know it, We have been here five months tomorrow nearly half of an ordinary year, you will infer from that, that this to me has been extra-ordinary, Did Brother Clements even get a letter from me? I got one only from him and answered it, I shall write to him again the first opportunity, I wrote to Sis Mollie¹⁰⁸ again last week though I have received no tidings from the one _____ I am well pleased with my clothing, I appretiate [sic] them most highly emanating [sic] as a gift from my dearly beloved Ma. You will not (not) neglect to bestow my Love and compliments upon all objects requiring them, Please continue to write, and notify me if any of those predicted marriages becomes notorious, For the present I shall relapse into silence,

Devotionally your Brother,

J.S. Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Pinkston, Elizabeth's husband.

¹⁰⁷ Possibly another reference to the recipient of Ambrose's affections.

¹⁰⁸ Possibly another sister-in-law, although there is no reference in the Ambrose section of the Dawley family history.

Ohio State Prison, Jan. 28th
1864

My Dear Sister,

Your letter of 14th ins't was rec'd last Sat, I replied to Lizzie's rec'd with yours Last Sunday and today is my next periodical opportunity, so you perceive I am still cultivating punctuality. You speak of the cold weather, Yes the new year entered completely chilled, but I presume that the immeasurable [sic] quantity of hot stews and slops consumable as iniatory [sic] to the emerging year were quite sufficient at least to warm the interior of the worlds people, but allow me to assure you that notwithstanding its (the stews) arder [sic] its pinetrativeness [sic] was not sufficiently skilled to reach the interior of this Sanctum. You speak of persons having frozen to death, that is what I term taking a cool adieu of our earthly Friends. You speak of a wedding also upon the evening preceding the sudden change, it appears that they the Lovers anticipated the change and endeavored to avoid its effects by combining efforts but I see no wrong in it as they are probably preparing to fill the vacation made by the destructive freeze. The news of Donim [illegible] Lou's marriage is slightly tinged with vitality, for really I had long since classed her in the ring of celibets [sic], but am willing to be convinced in regard to her apathy, Their amatory relations – or pretentions [sic]– are no doubt of long standing, Sufficiently contemplated and well digested, but I will not animadvert their matured courtship, Love affairs generally do not admit serntiny [?] Col. R.S. Cluke and Capt W.B. Lewis of the Regiment to which I belong, Died recently at Johnson's Island¹⁰⁹, Their bodies were removed to Kentucky and interred there by their Friends, There has not been any deaths among the Prisoners incarcerated here, I have rec'd a letter from Sis Mollie & one from Harveys Mary¹¹⁰ This week Tell Sis Marthy that her aunt Winie [?] Park has been joined matrimonially to Jonah Park, so she has another Uncle, Uncle Charly Mit

¹⁰⁹ Colonel R.S. Cluke and Captain William B. Lewis, both of the eighth Kentucky Cavalry according to NARA records, died at Johnson's Island. Cluke died July 1, 1864, with no cause of death specified. Lewis died January 5, 1864, of pneumonia. National Archives and Records Administration, microfilm 598 #82. Department Relating to Confederate Prisoners of War, vol. 274-276. Johnson's Island, Oh, Military Prison. "Register of Prisoners Confined, Transferred, Released, Deceased." 1862-1865.

¹¹⁰ The Mary E. referenced earlier.

was to have been married to Uncle Billy Richisons Widow, The evening selected came, all the Richison's, Crow's, King's, Tub's, Kimie's, &c, came but the veritable Charles declared that the evening was too cold for him to venture out, so his betrothed, greatly incensed, was forced to sleep alone notwithstanding to coldness of the weather, and the last news was that Charles had an extra pair of Lisence [sic] and could find no sale for them. Write very soon Give my Love, unallyed [sic], to all my friends, I wrote a Letter to Cousin Maggie H. week before last, I am with warmth Your Brother

J.S. Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

Ohio State Prison, Feb 21st 1864

My Dear Sister

I shall devote a portion of this Sabbath to writing to you, I could not answer your letter upon reception, but hope that my answer will be none the less appreciated for coming in at the Eleventh hour, I was not aware, until I rec'd your letter, that Lizzie Scrivner of olden times was now the wife of Hilten Clements, Sis Hollie wrote concerning the death of Joseph and Anderson and also of the transportation of Hannah, from Mo, to Ky, I highly estimate the the [sic] Love of my Dear Cousin Mary and by you to remember me to her and the family as often as you write to them, she says "She loves me if no one else does", She certainly is impressed with the belief that I am nearly entirely forgotten, a recluse and an outcast, well I am a recluse and would like to be out cast, but I do not believe that I am forgotten, You know I was always egotistical I am none the less so because I am thus immersed, I still believe that there are a few who regard me with feelings of deep interest, I very likely am, mistaken in this, as I have been in many things, Miss Roda wishes to know what I would think were she to ask me to her wedding, at a glance I would think I coul [sic] not go, but upon reflection I would think will now I__ declare! Who would have thought it! You may ask why so surprised, well just because I always thought Miss Roda a disliker of man-kind, and would be somewhat astounded to learn that at this late period, she had become softened toward the race, sufficiently to allow herself united with one of Pantaloon gender, but do not think it flattering when I say, that if she undertakes it she will doubtless go through with it, and

make her companion happy, for to my certain knowledge she never undertook anything that she did not accomplish, I will retain the rest of my opinion until after the wedding, This leaves me well with the exception of cold, write very soon to your Brother

J.S. Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

Ohio State Prison March 14th 1864

My Dear Sister

I will not attempt rhetorical [sic] accuracy, but will lay aside all timidity and venture boldly upon the subject of indispensable importance, If my watch, miniature [sic], etc, are tendered to any of you, I desire you to take charge of them (Harvey will keep all papers) but I forbid your asking for them so long as there is a possibility of my returning. When you know, or have reason to believe that I am nomore [sic] Then the watch is yours, you may demand it and keep it in remembrance of me, you may also collect pictures and papers, read the letters, if you get them all, they will probably explain some things that to you are now mysterious, but when you read, remember erring [illegible] humanity and withhold your censure. It is quite likely that early in life I fell into the channel too closely pursued by many of the Trowser [sic] sex, viz: Courting the temporary applause of the vacillating, instead of the induring [sic] approbation of the discerning, and often too only to pacify transitory ambition. Do you view me as a man of such inferior intellectual locomotion that I cannot instantaneously dash beyond the power of Female fallacy? I have always been taught that a man, to be a true Orator (to which I aspire), must possess a large stock of generous sentiments, warm feelings, tender sensibilities, etc, I have exemplified these traits of oratorical capacity, by my display of generosity, my Love _ like the beneficent sun _ sheds its rays to gladden the hearts of every one, and scoffs at her who seeks it all! “You say, the loss of one is often the gain of two” We generally have living proof of that in very few years after the consummation of matrimony. Tell Miss Roda, Cousins Kate Clements¹¹¹ and Kate Hance that if they do not

¹¹¹ Unfortunately the Clements family history ends the generation before this one in the Dawley family history notes.

go off in this harmonious flourry [sic], I shall loose all hope of their ever ascending the scale of matrimony. There can be inferences drawn from this letter, consequently, I beg you exclude it from the optics of the Public. Let the worlds expressions flow freely! do not attempt justification, Hereafter my correspondents will confine themselves to one page of letter paper, not larger than this, Please notify them, or as many as you see. We (the Prisoners) are now limited to one letter per week. It is quite likely that I will not be able to answer all letters, but will make good use of my periodical privilege. Give my Love to Mr Dawley¹¹², Soney, Pa, Ma, etc, My Regards to all Friends. Write soon to your Brother

J. S. Ambrose

Capt. C. S. A.

Fort Delaware¹¹³ April 3rd 1864

My Sister,

We arrived here one week ago today. Fort Delaware is on an island of 75 Acres, protected from the tide by embankment. The recent rains have submerged the island, but we have plank walks, owing to the lowness [sic] of the situation I am impressed with the opinion that it will be quite unhealthy during the warm season, we are permitted to buy or receive any eatables here. Butter is worth 60. cts per pound.¹¹⁴ Should you send me anything, let it be principally Butter, use your judgment in regard to sending anything for

¹¹² Most likely Nannie's husband James St. Clair Dawley.

¹¹³ A Roll of Prisoners of War from the Ohio Penitentiary lists Ambrose as being transferred to Fort Delaware on March 25, 1864. Colonel William Ward, who also served under Morgan and was captured during the Raid, wrote in his diary that he was transferred on March 28, 1864. There may be a slight discrepancy in the records, with one being a departure date and one being an arrival date, or the men may have left the Penitentiary over a period of several days. NARA records, microfilm, M319, #43. Compiled service records of Confederate Soldiers who served in Organizations from Kentucky. 7th Cavalry – Su-Z. 8th Cavalry – A-Bo; R.B. Rosenberg, ed. "For the Sake of My Country": *The diary of Col. W.W. Ward, 9th Tennessee Cavalry, Morgan's Brigade, C.S.A.* (Murfreesboro, Tn: Southern Heritage Press, 1992), 15.

¹¹⁴ Prices had skyrocketed on most goods throughout the war. One year previously, butter had risen to \$3.25 per pound, bacon to \$1.50 per pound, and potatoes were \$16 per bushel. In January 1864, flour cost \$150 per barrel and meal \$16 per bushel. By March of 1864, bacon had risen to between \$10 and \$15 per pound, and meal was \$50 per bushel. Denney, Robert E., *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 97, 139, 162.

it may cost more to Express a box than the articles would cost here. Express to Capt. J.S.Ambrose, Prisoner of War Morgans Command Fort Delaware, Division 27th Direct all letters to Fort Delaware Capt J.S.Ambrose Morgans Command write very soon and should you express me anything do it without delay. I wrote to Mary, E, last Monday. I am well.

Devotedly your Brother

J.S.Ambrose

Capt. C. S. A.

Fort Delaware April 28th 1864

My Dearly beloved Sister,

Your's of 18th with \$5.00¹¹⁵ inclosed arrived yesterday. I was so glad to rec'd a letter from home, but distressed to learn that you, my Dear Ma, and others of the family are unwell, but to judge from the general tone of your letter you are all improving though slowly I could not refrain weeping, when I read " Through the kind mercies of God I hope to see my Brother again" I wrote to Cyrene day before yesterday She can write to me now as often a [sic] she will. Enclosed you will find two photographs one for you and one for Ma.¹¹⁶ I have nothing to tender you (yet) for your kindness but my never failing Love and this ugly face But hope to be able one day to amply repay all kindness extended to me. I am very well, weigh (160) one hundred and sixty – lbs. Give my Love to Jimmie, Ma, Pa and all my Relatives and Friends. Write very soon to your Brother who loves you Dearly,

¹¹⁵ Because Kentucky had not seceded from the Union, it is possible that these were Union dollars, but they could have been Confederate notes. The previous July, as recorded by John B. Jones, the Rebel War Clerk in the Confederate War Department at Richmond, Virginia, ten dollars in Confederate notes bought just one dollar in gold. It can be assumed the depreciation had continued at a fairly rapid rate, due to the South's struggles throughout 1863 and 1864. Denney, Robert E., *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 106.

¹¹⁶ A month previously, another member of Ambrose's brigade, with whom he had been imprisoned at the Ohio State Penitentiary as well, mentioned in his diary a photographer who came to visit the prison and took their pictures. Colonel William Ward recounts, "Considerable stir with our crowd preparing to have pictures taken. Have mine taken, order half dozen. John L. Gihon, Photographic Art Galleries, 1024 Chestnut St. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Paid \$2 ½ to the artist." Journal entry, April 23, 1864, Fort Delaware. Excerpted in Denney, Robert E., *Civil War Prisons and Escapes*, 176.

J. S. Ambrose

Capt. C. S. A.

Fort Delaware May 28th 1864

My Affectionate Sister,

Your's with \$5.00 enclosed reached me this morning you can not imagine with what eagerness I opened your letter when I rec'd it and recognized your handwrite [sic] for it was proof to me that you was getting well. Oh! How happy I would be _ even in my prisoned condition _ if I could only know that you, my Dear Ma, and all Friends (Relatives) were restored to good health. My little namesake who left this world before knowing its wickedness and cruelty is fare [sic] better off than I can probably ever be,¹¹⁷ nevertheless when I read of his death I wept bitterly I thought of my own hard life and how much better for me had I been taken like him. I will need nothing more than I have mentioned only a little money occasionly, I have enough for a while, Inclosed you find the photograph of the Maj. Of my Reg. I wish Harvey to keep it and all others for me, by all others, I mean those of my friends I have a great many, I wish to send one in each letter home, until they are all gone. You may write two or three pages, I cannot, I am in excellent health, I wish to send one of my photographs to each of my sisters, for my return is fraught with great uncertainty _ I have sent one to Mollie, Inclosed in this is also one for sister Pamela.¹¹⁸ Write very soon Give my love to Jimmi Ma, Pa, Brothers, Sisters &c. Devotedly J. S. Ambrose

Capt. C. S. A.

Should you send me another Box Boil the Hams do not send them if too expensive

Fort Delaware June 21st 1864

My Dear Sister,

Yours of 15th is at hand. I know Jimmi is not able to serve, consequently he had better pay out rather than attempt to serve. I sent my Photograph to Cyrene for her

¹¹⁷ Nannie and James S. Dawley's fourth child, one of twins, Joseph S. Dawley, born March 13, 1864; died April 24, 1864. (Dawley family history)

¹¹⁸ The fourth Ambrose child, Pamela, born March 26, 1832.

Ma. I have by no means forgotten my Sis, Lizzie, am writing to one of the family, but I now remember she (Cyrene) is not at home so Lizzie may expect a letter from me very soon. It affords one great relief to know that you and my Dear Ma are able to go visiting. Have my watch put in good order and wear it. If I return all will be made right, if not it is yours. Should you ever meet with Mrs. McIntire, do not mention the watch or Picture, but for my sake treat her with the utmost kindness and friendship also all the family. She has justifiable reasons for the course she has pursued. Besides a box occasionally it takes about five dollars every three weeks to buy stationery [sic] and sufficient means to keep soul & body together.¹¹⁹ This may appear extravagant, but indeed I am the most equinomial [sic] man in this Prison. Inclosed [sic] is a Photograph for Harvey to keep for me. I wish to know how many he has received for me. Give my love to Ma, Pa Jimmi and all the Family. Kiss the Babies for me. Write soon. I am Devotedly Your Brother
J.S. Ambrose

Fort Delaware July 26th 1864

My Dear Sister,

Yours of 17th inst. was rec'd yesterevening. Yes I think the time long between letters, even when answered without delay, imagine then, my anxiety when weeks intervene, My Dear sister I feel competent to sympathize with you in your sickness. I think Ma is the proper one to keep my things and no doubt she feels slighted because I did not have them sent to her at the start it was my desire but at the time did not mention it. I wish her to claim the right to keep them and I will write to Brother to turn my trunk &c over to her as she thinks she has a right to them. I wish all the Photographs, mine excluded, put together and locked up in my trunk. I have papers & other articles in

¹¹⁹ It seems the prisoners kept accounts with the Commandant at Fort Delaware, buying stationary and other in sundry items. Several pages of account books show Ambrose's name and account for various months. Most list accounts of five dollars, although some books seem to span several months and thus include larger amounts of money. Many of the notations are illegible, but some read "To order on sutler," "to cash," "by cash," "to sutler," or "to amount transfer." NARA records, microfilm, M598, Roll 48. Department Relating to Confederate Prisoners of War, 1862-1865. Vol. 169-172: Records Relating to Individual Prisons or Stations. Fort Delaware, Delaware, Military Prison. "Ledgers of Prisoners = Accounts, July 1863-July 1864.;" M598, Roll 49. Vol 173-175. "Ledgers of Prisoners = Accounts, July 1864-January 1865."

my trunk that I do not wish every one (no one) to examine. Though rather than wound the feelings of one Brother or sister I would prefer every thing burned to ashes. A portion of your letter is enigmatical, but I will try and solve it. I have just now, since I began this letter received a box from Brother Tom & Lizzie Pinkston, it arrived in excellent order, the corn bread only was spoilt every thing else is as nice as when packed. Oh how I appreciate it! Should any of you (in the course of time) send me another Box, put 4 or 5 lbs of ground coffey [sic], and sugar in the box. Tender my highest regards to all friends My Love to my Darling Ma, also to Par Brothers & Sisters. I am very well exceptin [illegible] Rumatism [sic] in my knees and they are swollen [sic] but little, will not be scerious [sic] I think. Write very soon to Your Brother

J. S. Ambrose

Capt. C. S. A.

Fort Delaware Sept 25th 1864

My Dear Sister,

Some time has elapsed since I have heard from you consequently I am of the opinion that you did not get my answer to your last which I rec'd some _ week ago inclosed [sic] \$5.00. I answered it, also a great many others not heard from. I know not where to rest the blame, therefore will make no accusations, I hope you did not start me the box of which you spake [sic], the one Aunt Ann decided was not allowed to reach me, I have nothing to write, I have long since exhausted my store of (not contraband) information. I rec'd a letter from Brother Clem last week which is the last rec'd from Gallatin I am enjoying good health a blessing never too highly appreciated, The subject I now broach is of but little interest nevertheless I desire you keep it to yourself. No doubt Miss Mag's marriage Feb. last surprised you, it did not me & this is what I wish to explain soon after I was captured she wrote me the most endearing letters I ever read. I will give you a few extracts (but will have to continue in several letters to explain) "I have so much to say, and one thing I am shure [sic] to say if ever I see you and that is that you should not leave me, yes if I am ever permitted [sic] to see you again you shall never leave me, I am wrecked, desolate oh! For I have nothing to live for when you are gone, I

watch others in their happiness & I long for the light of your smiles to gladden my dull way, but duty stern relentless duty bids you stay & me wait & hope, but O that hope, though it is but a small spark in the far off future til all that binds me to this cold & selfish world," These are nothing compaired [sic] with her letters you could scarcely read them and not shed tears. You may ask what's wrong in this, nothing, but then she appealed to me to come home, to do that which my honor would not allow,¹²⁰ my ambition was aroused my pride piqued in my next I will give you my answer. Your Brother

J. S. Ambrose Capt. C. S. A.

Fort Delaware Oct 13th 1864

My Dear Sister,

Again my heart is gladdened. I have just rec'd your favor of 4th inst. Indeed I do not comprehend you concerning the Lady of Louisville. I have written but to two Ladies in that city. I still correspond with them and they have each sent me their photograph, viz: Miss Mallis McIntire & Miss Sallie J. Mitchell. I have written to none other, the above two are my preferences there, and they are only friends. I know not to whom you allude, but I can assure you that all [three underlines] women have my unhesitating approbation to marry whom they choose. I Rec'd & answered a letter from brother Clem on the 11th The following 4 tracts are from my answer to Maggies letter asking me to come home Sept 24 1863 Maggie you have often told me you regarded me as a man capable of managing my own affairs, and also that you appreciate my advice, therefore I will speak plainly. You have asked that of me which my Parents, Brothers & Sisters would disdain to do, viz. to lay down my honor for your sake. I would do anything honorably to promote your happiness, but you have asked of me what I will do for no one. You say I am your preference, yet you doubt me. Excuse me but honesty prompts me to say that situated as I am I can do nothing to raise the standard of confidence, so my advice is seek one whom you can Love (and your amorous disposition will allow you to

¹²⁰ By this, he may be referring to the Oath of Allegiance. Possibly his love interest asked him to take it in order that he be allowed to return to Kentucky and marry her.

love any nice Gentleman) and with him write your destiny. Think not of my happiness, study your own, and as you wisely suggest if I never come home what will become of you. I construe that into a request to be released, so consider yourself a float on the wide ocean of celibacy free to choose, contract & bind, etc. This is enough of my letter for you to know why certain things transpired. I feel that I done right – My Love to all Write very soon Your Brother

J. S. Ambrose

Capt C. S. A.

Fort Delaware, Nov. 23rd 1864

My Dear Sister,

Your's of 19th inst has just been read and with my usual promptness [sic] I reply. I find that my letters have all been rec'd except the one containing the Permit.¹²¹ I rec'd a letter from Brother Clem 14th inst. (at present we cannot procure a permit) but I wrote to Clem and requested the Commander of this post¹²² (by note) to put a permit in it and forward it. I am not aware that the favor was granted me can't tell until I hear from Clem again. I wrote for a suit of gray cloth, my overcoat, undershirts, socks, 1 par [sic] suspenders &c. I am well aware that you cannot send them without a special permit from the Commander of this post. I am limited to one page. My correspondents are not I think you may write 2 or 3 pages with impunity. Should my permit reach you, have my clothing cut large I weigh about 170 lbs, the suit last winter was rather tight, notwithstanding I have worn them out. You know I always admired fashion. You need not place credence in half you hear especially in love affairs. I am glad my Friends agree with me in regard to Miss M. I rejoice that every thing (respecting her) has gone as it has and that she is married. I am as well as usual have no news. Give my love to all, Ma & Pa especially. Write as often as convenient and ever believe me your Brother Devotedly,

¹²¹ Possibly a permit to receive a large package or shipment of clothing and other necessities, as mentioned in further letters.

¹²² General Albin F. Shoepf assumed command of Fort Delaware on April 17, 1863 and served until January 15, 1866, when he received his release from the service of the United States' Army. Fetzer and Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*, 94, 146. According to another prisoner captured with Ambrose as part of Morgan's Brigade, Shoepf was a "clever kind gentleman [who] treats prisoners kindly and is polite to everyone." Rosenburg, *For the Sake of My Country*, 28.

J. S. Ambrose

Capt. C. S. A.

Fort Delaware, Dec. 22nd 1864

My Dear Sister,

Yours of 14th inst [sic] has just been rec'd, yes, I thought your letter a long time coming, but your excuse for delay is perfectly satisfactory. I see no chance to get clothing only from home, and if you have not received permission tell Pa to write to Brig. General Choeff [Shoepf] commanding Post Fort Delaware Del, and ask him to please forward permission to Express to Capt J.S.Ambrose &c, certain articles of clothing naming in his letter and if this fails we will have done all that's possible. I have heard (as you say) that arrangements have been made to furnish Prisoners but think it results quite remote. Yes, My Dear sister This indeed is a world of probation and I think I have experienced most every change susceptible to humanity and if my constitution will only support my courage I may yet learn and endure a great deal. You importune me to be courageous and bear my burdens manfully, let me assure you, though my reflections be ever so grave, I am always cheerful offering relief to every drooping spirit and though my fate appears seal'd I am perfectly resigned to the will of my Maker, consequently I desire my Parents and friends not to be uneasy nor suffer on my account. I may sometimes get vexed and write despondingly, - it's wrong and I am all right. I would like very much to accept Miss Rhoda's polite invitation to dinner Christmas, but as I have some important business to attend to about that time beg to be excused. My Love to Ma, Pa ___ D and all Friends, My 2nd Lieut. J. W. Jones desires me ask W. C. Alphis through you, (brother Clem) if he has recently received a letter from him,

Ever Devotedly your Brother

J. S. Ambrose

Capt. C. S. A

Officer's Barracks Fort Del. Jan 22nd/65

My Sister

Your's of 9th inst has arrived. I fear you misconstrued my letter of Dec, 22nd. I am sometimes lowspirited and likely say more than is real, it is not my desire to write

anything that will cause my friends trouble and hence [sic] forth I will studiously avoid it. I am firm, steadfast, immovable [sic] relying on him who rules destinies for protection, do not be troubled about me. My trials are of the most trivial kind and it is weakness in me to complain for I am not a child but a stern defiant man. I am not a minister of the Gospel nor do I lay claim to master ability, but feel competent to deliver a few praiseworthy lectures upon Patience, temperance, firmness, etc. My knowledge is (~~practically~~) experimental, For some time past I have been unwell¹²³ but have now nearly entirely recovered, Well it appears that people will marry war or no war. I was slightly acquainted with Miss Ellis, her two brothers belong to my company. Let me assure you that if I ever fill the vacant seat at table of which you speak, I will do the good things of life justice and by the by I am becoming an excellent cook¹²⁴, think I'll give gastronomical lectures, I need nothing at present that I can receive. I will always make my wants known, Excuse this for I write with a trembling hand. I am Devotedly your brother

My Love to Ma, Pa, Jimmie, &c

J.S. Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

Officers Barracks Fort Del. Feb 8th/65

My Dear Sister,

Yours of 25th Jan has just been rec'd and carefully perused, I did not cast it from me scornfully! No, I cannot treat any thing from one so dear, in that stile [sic], Nor shall I censure you, for I doubt not that you are prompted by pure honest motives, but we are differently situated consequently do not see alike. It is probably, quite likely that two years more confinement will close my earthly career if so I die honorably, better that than live in disgrace, As to my health it has greatly improved and I am now as well as usual. The Love I bear for my Darling Parents, Brothers and Sisters is unparalleled, and after

¹²³ The NARA, via information received from the Office Manager of the Fort Delaware Society, records Ambrose as undergoing hospital care from January 7, 1865, to January 12, 1865. Apparently the reason is undetermined, but small pox is hinted at. Email message received from Fort Delaware Society, July 13, 2004. <www.del.net/org/fort>.

the incubus of war shall have passed away, and the effulgent beams of peace gladden the hearts of our people, I hope then to return to them with a character unsullied, If not, they probably will never see me, Therefore allow me to importune you to cease all efforts upon the subject introduced, do no think me cruel nor harsh for I really appreciate your motives but can not endorse them, Give my Love to Ma, Pa, and all loved ones, There are a great deal talk about Exchange¹²⁵, I am anxious to experience it. Write soon and Ever believe me Devotedly your Brother,

J.S. Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

Fort Del. Officers Barracks Feb 26th 1865

My Dear Sister

What! is it possible that a guardian has been appointed for me? but yesterday, I was called out, and informed that the Secretary of war has ordered my release from prison by my taking the oath. for the present I politely declined the favor.¹²⁶ I tryed [sic] to ascertain who was thus officiating without my knowledge or consent, the only information I could gain was that I had Friends working for me without my knowledge of it, Even so, but tis best for them to consult my feeling first and save themselves much trouble, I do not believe that any of you had any thing to do with it, It must have originated in Lawrenceburg or Louisville though I may be mistaken. I wish they would exert their influence and get me Exchanged for some Federal Officer of my Rank who is lying in southern prison, then they would make two of us rejoice, The Exchange is doubtless going on, and I yet hope soon to be released and return to my Dixie Land More than two weeks have elapsed since I heard from any of you, what is the

¹²⁶ A roll sheet from the NARA has Joseph S. Ambrose, Capt., 8 Regt., KY Cav'y, listed as being offered the chance to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. Under Ambrose's name, the title of the roll reads, "Name appears as signature to an Oath of Allegiance to the United States, subscribed to at Fort Delaware, Del." Below, the sheet reads, "Place of residence: Anderson Co., KY. Complexion: Dark." In the remarks column is the most important information: "Declines Taking the Oath." Also as a postscript, at the bottom a note reads, "Name only appears in column of names." no date. NARA, microfilm, Confederate Prisoner Records.

matter? Why do you not write? Did my decision in my answer to your last throw a damper over our correspondence? I hope not, Tender My Love to Ma, Pa, and all Friends, There's much I would like to say concerning the above but dare not, will you all continue to write, I will Enform [sic] you should I be fortunate enough to get off on Exchange. I am as Ever Devotedly your Brother J.S. Ambrose

Capt. C.S.A.

Officers Barracks Fort Del March 6th 1865

Well My Dear Sister

After nearly twenty months imprisonment I am paroled for Exchange¹²⁷ in consequence of which I am writing you my farewell letter and cincerily [sic] hope ere you receive this I will be riding the ocean's waves on my southern tour, and now my Dear sister permit me to importune you not to censure me for any harsh or uncomfortable decision, but remember me when I am gone, O how I desire the Love and Prayers of my ever dearly beloved Parents, Brothers and Sisters, such love spirits me to deeds of Bravery and honor, God grant that I may never do any thing to disgrace the unsullied character of those who gave me Birth whose care reared me to enlightened manhood!! O that I could adequately express my gratitude for the kindness bestowed upon me by you all during my detention in Prison, Tell my Dear Ma and Pa that my hearts desire is meet them again on earth, and if ever I can do so with my character untarnished it will be the proudest and most blissful moment of my life, During my Existence I have weathered many a storm, and my constitution recovered many severe shocks but its elasticity rendered it competent to battle the waves successfully, and I am yet hopeful of meeting ___ [my?] Friend one of these days, we are having rainy disagreeable weather here now, Miss Roda says your Baby is the "Prettiest thing in the world" why did you not tell me

¹²⁷ Roll sheet from the NARA lists Ambrose as being listed on a "Roll of Prisoners of War at Fort Delaware, Del., paroled and forwarded to City point, Va., for exchange March 7, 1865." NARA, microfilm, Confederate Prisoner Records.

wheather [sic] it be nephew or niece¹²⁸, well kiss it for me any how, well we Leave tomorrow morning at 7 oclock without fail it is now 7 oclock and I have just been notified to be ready so as I have many things to do to night I must bid you all farewell Remember me I am devotedly your Brother

J.S. Ambrose
Capt. C.S. Army

Baptist College¹²⁹ March 15th 1865

My Dear Sister,

How delightful this is, I am enjoying the freedom of Richmond at the rate of 60 Dollars per day, one can get anything one wants in Richmond if one has money enough. When I first arrived I put up at the Spotswood hotel¹³⁰ at 60 Dollars per day had my boots blacked for 3 dollars took a dram for 7, etc, I am now Boarding with the president of the above named college a Baptist minister¹³¹, at 20 Dollars per day. my health is only tolerable good but I hope soon to be as stout as ever, I have met with and formed the acquaintance of all the Ky, Officials operating in this city, we are banded together as Brothers, I wrote 3 days since to Pa, Please tender my highest Regards to all

¹²⁸ The only children born to Nannie and J.S. Dawley during the war were the two twins listed earlier, of whom one died in April of 1864. This note must be referring to the other twin, William H. Dawley, who would have been almost a year old at the time of this letter. (Dawley family history)

¹²⁹ This Baptist college (called Richmond College at this time) became the University of Richmond in 1920 with the transcription of a new charter. Reuben E. Alley, *History of the University of Richmond, 1830-1971*, (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia. 1977), 174.

¹³⁰ The Spotswood Hotel in Richmond served as the gathering place for political and military elites of the South during the war. Brand new at the start of the war, the Spotswood opened in 1861, hosting even President Jefferson Davis for a time, until a more permanent residence for him could be found. Sadly, the hotel's glory days ended in short order, when a fire broke out and destroyed the hotel on December 25, 1870. Patterson, Gerard A. "A Tale of Two Hotels." From *Civil War Times* magazine, accessed online at <www.historynet.com> October 31, 2005.

¹³¹ Robert Ryland, president of Richmond College from 1832-1866. Ryland was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1827 and after a few years in the pulpit served in leadership at several universities and seminaries. Reuben E. Alley, *History of the University of Richmond*, 46-47.

Friend &c unchanging love to Ma, Pa, Brothers and Sisters, Ever devotedly your Brother

J.S. Ambrose

Capt. C.S. Army

Appendix 2

Clement-Ambrose Family Tree

John Clements – Elizabeth Thompson

had son

Joseph Ambrose I - ? Harriss

had son

Roger Clements (Jan.1, 1762) – Hannah Hathaway

had daughter

Joseph Ambrose II (Feb. 1762) – Elizabeth Ricketts

had son

Hannah Hathaway Clements (Nov. 17, 1799)

Joseph Ambrose III (Mar. 30, 1798)

children of Hannah Hathaway Clements and Joseph Ambrose III married Dec. 21, 1826

Elizabeth, b. September 12, 1827

Thomas William, b. January 2, 1829

Clement Roger, b. April 14, 1830

Pamela, b. March 26, 1832

James Harvey, b. June 25, 1833

Joseph IV, b. February 18, 1835

Nannie Hathaway, b. January 31, 1837

Catharine, born and died 1839

Hannah Mary, b. January 8, 1841

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