

Kelm Family Letters

[Note: These are the transcriptions of the hand-written Civil War letters (copied from the National Archives) relating to members of the Kelm family and their commander who were members of Company D, 27th Ky Vol Infantry.

Letter from Stanley Kelm at Camo near Elizabethtown, KY, to his father, Andrew Jackson Kelm of Union Star KY on December 26, 1861.

Dear Father,

It is with much pleasure that I take the present opportunity [sic] of writing you a few lines that I am well and hoping these few lines may find you enjoying the same Blessing.

We got to Elizabeth on Christmas Day and [sic] we're going [sic] to leave [sic] her [sic] in a few days and [sic] going to Gracin Spring to camp. Tell little A.J. Canary that he must write to me and tell Aby Kelm to write as soon as possible.

We are all very well satisfied but shore [sic] is one that that don't suit [sic] me – that is the condition of our bed, a little straw throwing on the ground and we don't lay as comfortable as I would like to. As the eating concerns, the fare does very well. We have loaf bread and [sic] beans, bacon, beef, potatoes, homly [sic], shugar [sic], coffe [sic], molassess [sic].

Tell all the boys that David Barnes is as fat as a Chiney [sic] Pig. He says for me to send his respect to his inquiring friends. Mr. Canary says his hips no better. I won't write till I draw my money. There is smawlpox [sic] in our camp. Isack Pullin is sick with the pluracy [sic]. Charles wants to see you very bad.

Capt [sic] Coyne got two galon [sic] of whiskey. Cost 2 dolars [sic] galon [sic]. Some of the boys got prety [sic] funny, but that would not bin [sic] nothing if we had bin [sic] at home. If you heare [sic] Handks [sic] boys, or they say any thing aboaut [sic] me, give them a quart and go ahead. I would to see them girls that I was with last Sunday. No more at present.

Yours Truly,

Stanley Kelm

Letter from Stanley Kelm at Union Camp at Grayson Springs, KY to his father, Andrew Jackson Kelm, Union Star KY [sic] (also a note from B.H. Canary), dated January 13, 1862.

Dear Father,

I now take my pen in hand to inform you that I am well at present and hope these few lines [sic] may find you all enjoying the same blessing. John and Jeff is well and hearty. I am very well satisfied at present Jeff is a Scout now. He after deserters now. Jeff and

John and Charles Rollins and Mart Rollins, and John Vandergriff and Joshua Livingston, and Mack Woodcraft and David Barnes and Jack Carrall and John hawkins [sic] sleep in one tent and Isac Pullan and we have fine times and losts [sic] of fun. We five decks of cards and we steal candles from the cook play till ten oclock [sic] at night.

We have plenty of everything to eat. George Hammers and about fifty of our men was on the other side of Green River. They got back this morning. Russaw [sic] has moved his men across Green River. We expect an attack soon. If they try us they will get sixth best in a eleven. Coyne's men is the fire eaters of the camp. They are like summer hog tirds [sic], they all stick together.

Nothing more at present. I must bring my letter to a close but remain yours until death.

Yours Truly

Standley [sic] Kelm

(PS from B. H. Canary, written in the same handwriting as above)

Tell Jack canary[sic] that his father is harty [sic] but he is crippled with his hip. He has plenty of anything he wants and nothing to do.

The Colonel says he shall be discharged as soon as the regiment is full. He sends his best respects to you and his family.

B.H. Canary

Letter from Stanley Kelm (and a note from B. H. Canary) to Stanley's parents, from Camp Wortham, Grayson Springs KY, dated January 20, 1862.

Dear Parents

I take the present opportunity of writing you a few lines that I am well and John, but Jeff, he has got the measels [sic].

I hope when I hear from you all that you are enjoying this ame [sic] blessing. Your letter cum [sic] to hand on the 22 of this month an [sic] I am glad to hear from you all and that you are all well. You wrote that you got \$8 dollars hundred tobaco [sic]. It is a good price. We can get plenty whiskey to drink and plenty to eat. The Regiment is not filled yet, but we elected field officers yesterday. I can say this much, that the Regiment won't be filled and I don't care.

little A. J. Canary that Charles Rollins wants to see him the worst time. Tell him to write to me. I would like to heare [sic] from him the best kind. Tell Aunt Elizabeth Rollins that me and John send Best Respects to hear [sic] and John and Jefferson. You must write to me soon as you posible [sic] can for I want to hear from you. With this few lines I will say I remain your affectionate son until death.

Yours truly, Stanley Kelm

Letter from Stanley Kelm to his father from Camp Wortham, C.D. Pennebaker, 27th Ky Regiment, Grayson Springs, KY, dated January 27, 1862

Dear Father,

This morning I feel like I would love to see you all very much, but I won't come any nearer than to write you a few lines in which I will say that we are all well at the present and I hope these few lines will find you all enjoying the same.

We are all well satisfied as you might expect in this occasion. I wish you could come out and see us all before we live [sic] here.

There was a man here yesterday from the Southern Army who says there is one hundred and [sic] fifty [sic] thousand troops here [sic] boiling [sic] green [sic]. 3000 thousand sick in hospital. Tell Marthia Carrold that Jack is getting well again. I never saw a man want to see anyone as bad as he want to see her. You must see her and tell her and write all about how she is and tell us all the news you can.

Stanley S. Kelm

Letter from John Kelm to his Cousin Margaret Canary and his mother of Union Star KY., from Camp Wortham, Grayson Springs, KY[sic], dated February 1, 1862.

My Dear Cousin

I take this opportunity to let you know that I am well at the present time, hoping these few lines may find [sic] you enjoying [sic] the same blessing. Tell Caroline that I would like to see her the best kind [sic], for I intend [sic] to send her a present as soon as I draw my wages. I would like to be home mighty well but I am blood [sic] thirsty for a secist [sic]. Our tents are a [sic] warm as a log hose [sic]. I heard that they was a quarling [sic] with the little A.J. and for fear you was about to give them a lecture. I thought I would write. Write as soon as you get these few lines.

John Kelm to Margaret Canary

Dear Mother,

I take the present opportunity to let you no [sic] that I am well at present, hoping these few lines may find [sic] you enjoying [sic] the same blessing. I think a heap of my mother and father. When ever I think of the south, then I think of stay and perfecting [sic] my home. You must write as soon as you get these few lines. I remain you effecnit [sic] son until death.

John Kelm

Letter from John Kelm to his parents at Union Star Ky, from Camp Wortham, Grayson Spring KY, dated February 6, 1862.

Dear Mother and Father,

I now embrace [sic] the present opportunity of writing you a few lines to inform you of the fact that I am well and Stanley and Charles also.

Jefferson has left our camp and I want to no [sic] whether he is at home or not.

George Hamers he has been on a scot [sic] on Green River and Staley was along with him. They got in site [sic] of the Rebels but didn't get to kill any of them. They are taking everything they lay their hands on.

You herd [sic] that we never got anything for to eat. Tell the man that started that report he is a liar and the truth is not in him. We get everything that we want except stamps. We have'nt [sic] received any money yet, but we will. Old man Canary, he is in the hospital. He is about the sam [sic] as he as abin [sic]. I haven't any news of any importance to write to you. With these few lines I will say no more and will remain your affectionate [sic] son until death.

John Kelm

Write Soon

Letter from Stanley Kelm from the Union Camp at Grayson Springs KY to his father, dated February 7, 1862.

Dear Father,

Father, I now take the present oportunity [sic] of writing you a few lines to inform you that John and I remain well at present. Hoping when I hear from you that you are enjoying the same blessing. Farther [sic], I want you to write me and tell me where Jeferson is and what he said and where he is. Papa, I want you to cum [sic] and see us. It is not so far but what you could come and see me and John for I want to see you very bad.

Tell James Severs that I want to see him, and I send my Best Respects to al [sic] the boys in general and tell them to write to me. Isac Pullin said that he want his daddy to cum [sic] and see him as soon as possible. Tell little A.J. Canary that I would like to see him and I want him to write to me. It is great satisfaction to me to hear from my old friends. The health of the Regiment is tolerable good at the present time. I haven't any news of any importance to write to you. We have got one handred [sic] and fifty calvery [sic] men in our Regiment. They made us a present of them. They are to do our scouting. They will be very useful to us.

Charles Rollins, he is well. He is the same old Charley. With these few lines I will say no more at the present time. Hoping when I hear from you that you will be well. No more at present. I remain your affectionate [sic] son.

Stanly Kelm

Letter from Stanley Kelm (F. H. Hogan, his cousin) at the Union Camp at Grayson Springs KY to his father Andrew Jackson Kelm of Union Star KY, dated February 21, 1862.

My Affectionate Father,

It is with greatest of pleasure that I drop you a few lines informing you that I have returned from Boling [sic] Green last night, well and harty [sic] but fertinged [sic]. The Rebels has evacuated Boling [sic] green [sic] and is gone to Nashville [sic] to fortify there. They burnt and destroyed a imence [sic] quantity of provisions, and burnt a good many arms, and burnt one square of the town before they left.

Father, we have taken old Buckner and Johnson and 5 other Generals. I can't remember their names, and fifteen thousand prisoners and fifty cannons and twenty two hundred stands of arms and some provisions. There has bin [sic] a battle at Fort Henry and there we took 500 prisoners and 300 tents and 12 canons [sic] and a good many arms. At Fort Donalson [sic] where we took old Buckner there we took 42 canons [sic] and 15 thousan [sic] prisoners. I can't give you a full listing the the [sic] war. Father, I would be glad to see you all but I can't say when that will be. We are going to march tomorrow tot [sic] the third lock on Green River, and when I get there I will wright [sic] to you again. I am in very good spirits and in fine health. Father, John is well. He went to bolingreen [sic] with me and returned back safe and sound.

S. Kelm

Dear and Affectionate cousin,

I embrace this as an opportunity of writing you a few lines informing you that I am in good health. Me and Stanly is together and wrighting [sic] this in partnership. While the canons [sic] is roring [sic], the drums are beating, the fifes is blowing and the musket alls [sic] is flying and bayonets and sabers are shining for us. Still trust in that I will be able to return back home and be able to see you all. I want you to wright [sic] to me and give me the general news. ust feel like I can kill a rebel as far as I can see them. Mr. Kelm, please forward this to Fred Claycombe.

F.H. Hogan

Letter from Charles C. Rollins at Union Camp Underwood, Rochester, Butler County, KY, to his uncle, Andrew Jackson Kelm of Union Star, KY, dated March 3, 1862.

Dear Uncle,

I seat myself down to write you a few lines to inform you that I am well at present – hoping that these few lines may find you enjoying the same good Blessing.

Uncle Jack, your boys is well at present – am well satisfied, and sends their Best Respects to you all. Uncle Jack, I would like to see you all but I don't know when it will be but I hope it won't be long. I haven't much news to write, but we hear that the Reabels [sic] are retreating back all the time. We never herd [sic] from Jefferson since he left. John and Stanly and myself all stick together like brother, and we want to see you as bad as anybody in the world, but we don't intend to run off to get to see you.

Uncle Jack, tell my mother that I am well an [sic] doing well. Stan and John an [sic] myself send our love and Best Respects to her. John Hawkins is well and sends love to his father. Direct your letters to Rochester, Camp Underwood, Penebacks [sic] Regiment in care of Capt [sic] Coyne.

Uncle Jack, I wrote a letter to Cyrus Bruner and Edward McGlothling the day before we started from Camp Wortham, and I told them not to write til [sic] I note what post office to write to. Tell them where to write to. Jack Carold says he wants yu [sic] to have some whiskey at Lewis Whelers again when we get back. No more at present but remain your affectionate Nephew until death.

C. C. Rollins

Postscript: John Vandygriff and Josh Livengood and Bill Overton is Cort [sic] Martial

[The last page of the letter is a hand drawn cartoon of two Union Soldiers entitled "Charles Rollins, the Red Rover out for a fight."]

Letter from John Kelm from Union Camp Underwood Ky to his father, dated March 15, 1862.

Dear Father,

I take my pen in hand to inform you that I am well at present and truly hope that these few lines mfy [sic] find you enjoying the same good health.

We are now camping on Green River at the locks No. 3 at Rochester. We have a fine place to camp here. The Breckinridge boys is all well. We have plenty of everything but money, and we expect to get some money soon. I would like to see you all but can't see you now. I think the war will soon be over. I am well satisfied at this time. We are drilled well enough to fight a good battle. We drill 6 hours a day. They has 13 waggons [sic] and 80 mules came last night to our redgiment [sic] four [sic] our use from headquarters. We expect to stay here a few weeks. When we move we will go to Memphis or Nashville.

Stanley sends his best respects to you all. He weighs 170 pounds. Tell Caroline I send her a present, a breast pin. Tell her to keep it to remember me. I shall bring my short letter to close.

Yours truly, rite [sic] soon,

John Kelm

United States Soldier

1862

Letter from John Kelm to his father from Camp Pear, Athens, Alabama, dated 12 July 1862.

Dear Father

It is with the greatest of pleasure hat [sic] I seat myself once more to drop you a few lines informing you that I am well at the presnt [sic] time and have had good health ever since I left home. I would be very glad to see you all but the body of land and water that lies between us deprives me of the satisfaction.

John R. Hawkins is well and harty [sic] and says he wants to see the folks very much. He says for you to give his respects to all inquiring friends and especailly [sic] to all of the girls.

Direct your letters to Athens, Alabama, the 27th Reg. KY. Vol, the 19 Bregade [sic], the H Division, the Ohio Army. Wright [sic] soon and give me the general news.

We have camped at a beautiful place. We have got the very best of water and plenty of it and plenty to eat an [sic] I expect we will remain here the largest part of the Summer. We are well situated. The weather is very hot down hear [sic]. All of the boys that came out of that neighborhood is well and harty [sic]. We have ben [sic] campt [sic] 6 days. We have ben [sic] on an 8 days march. I tell you tit [sic] was hard on us shore [sic]. The weather being so very hot and dry, the roads very dusty. We suffered for the want of water and the dust would raise like thunderclouds. General Buels [sic] hole [sic] army was on the march at the same time. Now you can give a guess how it was.

C.C. Rolens is well and wants you wright [sic] to him as often as possible.

John Kellelem [sic]

Letter from Charles C. Rollins from Union Army Camp, Murfreesboros [sic] TN, to his uncle Andrew Jackson Kelm, Union Star KY, dated August 14, 1862, reporting the death of his two sons ages 14 and 15.

Dear Uncle

With a trembling heart full of sorrow and grieve [sic], I set myself this morning to give you an account of the most heartbreaking and sad and affair [sic] that happened yesterday. It is a sad thing for me to do, and it nearly breaks my heart, but I must try and gather myself to do so. Day before yesterday, we went to Nashville as a train guard. As a matter of course, we loaded our guns before we mounted the cars. John was left back as a camp guard. Yesterday morning we returned all safe. On our arrival, we received orders to withdraw the loads from our guns which was done with the exception of one, the one that proved to be fatal one a few hours afterwards.

After dinner, the boys who was a kind of devilish-eyed by the trip, played together. John was among the boys enjoying himself with the balance, when at last, to the misfortune of all, they commencent [sic] pointing guns at one another. Huen Black, unthoughtful, picked up the loaded gun, thinking at the same time they were all empty, cock, pointed it toward John. A second afterward, John, after walking a few steps layt [sic] his self on the ground with a wound in his right breast which proved to be fatal. He called for me. I was with him a second afterwards, and assisted him all I could, though it was near as much as I could to keep on my feet. Nothing in the world did ever have such an effect on me as that, for he was the only one siche [sic] Stanley died, that I rely on. He was my only comfort. He done anything in the world for me and so did I. We lived together here, like brothers, more so, and now O it to hard for me to think about it. I am nearly distracted. The whole company, the whole regiment shows their grieve [sic] and sorrow for John. The Colonel, as well as the other officers, came to see him yesterday, and exclaimed their sorrow. John was beloved by all that knew him, and his loss is felt by every one. After he was shot, he called Huen Black to him, and said "Huen, you done this accidentally, and I will forgive you." And he reacht [sic] his hand out to him. John kept in his mind some 2 hours after he was shot and before dying he took hold of my hand and said "Charley, I hate to lieve [sic] you, but I am bound to do it. And I want you to get my money from the captain, for I am going to meet Stanley in Heaven." He then asked for a drink of water, at which his spirit fled and he was no more.

The Colonel granted me the priveledge [sic] to get a fine coffin made and he will be burried [sic] with all the honors of war, and the honor of beloved fellow sholdiers [sic]. I will have to close, Dear Uncle. Don't take it too hard. John is in a better world. I know it is hard for you but try and reconcile yourself. Your affectionate niffiw [sic].

Charles Rollins

LETTER FROM C.C. ROLLINS TO HIS UNCLE ANDREW JACKSON KELM, FROM THE UNION CAMP NEAR NASHVILLE, TN dated August 22, 1862.

Dear Uncle,

With a heavy heart I seat myself to write you a few lines concerning the death of John and his request he in the first place told me to get all his money which a Captain Hamers had. But I could only get enough of it to defray his burial expenses from the fact

that you are the lawful heir and for me to get it, you will have to go to some magistrar [sic] or lawyer and have it done up according to law, or I can't get it. I can't get it unless you give your lawful consent to it.

I had him put away the best I could. He was put in the church yard in Murfreesboro. I don't know exactly what form it will have to be drawn up in, but if you can go to a good lawyer, he can do the thing up right, but I think you will have to write me an order to Hamers for the amount. Let it be what it may and specifying that the order shall be his receipt for the same. I should not want it if it had not been his last request and if I get it and see a good chance to send it to you I can do it as well as anybody else, and as lief [sic] being uncertain here and Hammers is acting Colonel over the convalescent camp back at Murfreesboro, and we don't know when we will get together and you had better fix it up as soon as you can.

I have already wrote you one letter before this and I want you to write to me as soon as you possibly can, for I am lost and troubled nearly to death for in the first place I sent a hundred dollars home by F.M. Jolly and the first I heard that he was dead and all my money gone and the next day after I heard it, that fatal accident befell my dear comrad [sic] and putting it all together, it is very hard for me to stand it.

Tell Mother that I am well and tell her I want her to write to me immediately concerning that money for it looks like I can't get no letters any more for the mail is very uncertain and therefore I want you to write often so I will be certain to get some of them. No more on that subject a present, only I remain yours truly until death.

C.C. Rollins

P.S.

This is the second letter. I wrote you one the day of his death and I gave you all the particulars of the affair in the first letter and I would like to know if you ever got it or not, and if you did not, I would write it to you again. But if you got the first one it is no use to write it any more so I must bring my letter to a close. Nothing more at present, only I still remain your truly until death.

C.C. Rollins

LETTER FROM DR. S.J. COYNE, ABERDEEN S. DAKOTA, FORMER CAPTAIN OF COMPANY D. 27th KY INFANTRY, TO GENERAL G.B. RAWSON SUPPORTING ANDREW JACKSON KELM'S APPLICATION FOR A PENSION, dated July 1, 1890.

General Green B. Rawson

Washington, D.C.

Dear General

On a recent visit to my old home in Kentucky, the enclosed letter was handed to me, and I wished to call your attention to some facts in connection with this case. In 1861, the claimant – Andrew Kellam [sic], living in a community half disloyal, had three sons from fifteen to twenty years of age. He sent them all to serve his country. Two of the boys lost their lives, and one returned but is of no benefit to the old man, now three score years and two, and has to depend on the labors of his hands. He close [sic] the younger of the two boys who have [sic] their lives to this country, upon whom to base his claim for dependent pension and had it rejected on what seems to me a mere technicality. John Kellim [sic] a mere boy of 15 years, upon returning from duty as a train guard from Chattanooga to Murfreesborough [sic], Tenn was shot by a comrad [sic] while in a little boyish play among the tents, before retiring to quarters. The orders were to remove the caps from the guns, and supposedly this was done. A comrad [sic] called him to halt and at the same time picked up a gun and pulled the trigger. The gun went off and John Killam [sic] died in my presence. Sure, General, the boy was there and ready for any duty for there never was a better soldier, and the Father is entitled not only to the small amt claimed, but the gratitude of a beneficent [sic] people.

But if it is a fact that the Father cannot get a pension because John was not shot by a rebel bullet, he still has a son Stanly S. Kellam [sic] who died in the swamps between Shiloh and Corinth of double pneumonia [sic]. Can he not so ammend [sic] his application as to substitute the other boy, Stanly S. for John so as to give him the benefit of the fifteen years pension which he has spent in pressing his claim. Oh! General, when a man gives all his boys, before they are even men should he not be kindly considered. I have no interest in this claim except this: I induced the boys to go and the Father let them.

Respectfully,

S. J. COYNE (Formerly Capt [sic], Co. D., 27th Ky

v