

"I am sorry to tell that some of our brave boys has got killed"

M.W. Parris to Jane Parris, July 3, 1862.

As you read...

M. W. [Major Wiley] Parris of Jackson County, North Carolina, was 37 when he enlisted in May, 1861, and became a private in the North Carolina 25th Infantry Regiment, Company B. The letter presented here is to his wife, Jane Parris. Less than two weeks after his letter of July 3, 1862, he was discharged "by reason of being over age" (*North Carolina Troops*, vol. 7, p. 376). The Federal Census of 1860 for Jackson County, North Carolina, lists an M.W. Parris, age 36, and Jane Parris, age 34, as wife.

In this letter, Parris writes of the battle at Malvern Hill, Virginia, on July 1, 1862, which was part of the Seven Days' Battles (June 25 – July 1, 1862). He lists the names of fellow soldiers from Jackson County killed and wounded in the battle. He briefly mentions the military action and comments on men in the hospital.

North Carolina Troops, vol. 7, lists the men of the North Carolina 25th Infantry Regiment mentioned in the letter: the Long mentioned in the letter may be Peter G. Long, who was wounded at Malvern Hill on July 1 and died of his wounds on July 17 (p. 374). John B. Queen was killed at Malvern Hill on July 1 (p. 376). Among the wounded at Malvern Hill were Joseph H. Moody (p. 374), Joseph W. Cogdill (p. 371), Daniel H. Hooper (p. 373), Samuel J. Parker (p. 375), and Alfred W. Parris (p. 375). Leander B. Hall was wounded at King's School House, Virginia, on June 25 and died July 12 (p. 373). William M. Beard was wounded at King's School House and died in the hospital at Richmond around July 7 (pp. 369-370). David W. Wilson died at Petersburg about July 1 of "febris continuous communis" (pp. 377-378). In addition, the letter mentions Captain Andrew W. Coleman ["Coalman"] of Company A, North Carolina 16th Infantry Regiment, who was "killed by a shell" at Frayser's Farm, Virginia, on June 30 (*North Carolina Troops*, vol. 6, p. 13).

— Hunter Library, Western Carolina University

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Parris' spelling and punctuation are inconsistent, and you may find this letter difficult to read. Try reading it out loud — Parris tended to spell words as they sounded.

1. Whose deaths and injuries did Parris mention in this letter?
2. How did he describe the wounded?
3. What did he say had happened to the dead? How were they buried?
4. What did Parris have to say about the Confederate victory? How do you think a person might have felt about winning a battle, having lost so many friends in the process?
5. How do you think his wife might have felt when she read this letter?

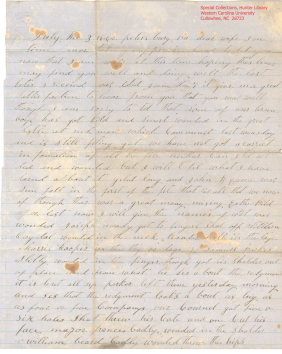


Figure 1.

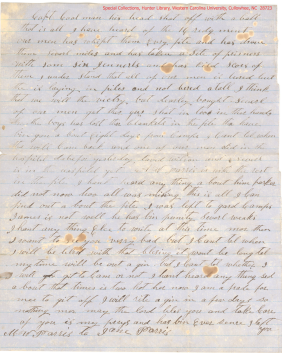


Figure 2.

Pages 1 and 2 of the letter. Click the images to enlarge.

July the 3 1862 peters burg, va dear wife I one time mor take my pen in hand to let you now that I am well at this time hoping thes lines may find you well and doing well the last leter I received was dated June the 7 it give mee great Sattis faction to hear from you that you was well though I am sorry to tel that Som of our brave boys has got kild and Severl wounded in the great battle at richmond which Comment last wensday and is Still fiting yet we have not got a correct information of all the file neither Can I tel all ded and wonded but I will ~~tel~~ tel what I have larnd a bout it giled long and John B. queen was Seen fall in the first of the fite that is all that we now of though thar was a great many missing [Eith ?] kild of or lost now I will give the names of what was wonded Joseph moody got to fingers shot off William Cogdal wonded in the neck leander hall in the lage harris hooper in the thy or lage ~~Samuel Parker~~ Slitly wonded in the finger though hot his Sholder out of place and from what he Ses a bout the redgment it is but all up parker left them yesterday morning and ses that the redgment looks a bout as big as as four or five Companys our Counel got five or six holes Shot threw his Cote and one Cut his face major frances badly wonded in the Sholder w william beard badly wonded threw the hips

Capt Coalman his head shot off with a ball that is all I have heard of the 16 redgment our men has whipt them evry fite and has drove them Severl miles and has taken a Site of prisners with som six Jennerls and has kild Scors of them I under Stand that all of our men is bured but the is laying in piles and not bered a tall I think that we will the victry but dearly bought Severl of our men got ther gun Shot in too in thier hands the the boys has lost ther blankets in the fite tha have bin gon a about eight days frm Camp I Cant tel when tha will Com back and one of our men did in the hospital da befor yesterday david wilson and severl is in the hospital yet A W parris is with the rest in the fite I hant heard any thing a bout him parker did not now hoo all was mising this is all I Can find out a bout the fite I was left to gard Camp James is not well he has bin punity Severl weeks I hant any thing Elce to write at this time mor then I want to See you verry bad but I Cant tel when I will be blest with that blesing it wont be long tel my time will be out a gin but I Cant tel whether I will gt git to Com or not I hant heard any thing sed a bout that times is two hot her now I am a frade for mee to git off I will rite a gin in a few days so nothing mor may the lord bles you and thake Care of you is my prays and has bin ever sence I left you

M W Parris to Jane Parris

On the web

More from LEARN NC

Visit us on the web at www.learnnc.org to learn more about topics related to this article, including Civil War, Jackson County, North Carolina, history, military, and soldiers.

Image credits

More information about these images and higher-resolution files are linked from the original web version of this document.

Figure 1 (page 2)

Courtesy of Hunter Library at Western Carolina University. This image is believed to be in the public domain. Users are advised to make their own copyright assessment.

Figure 2 (page 2)

Courtesy of Hunter Library at Western Carolina University. This image is believed to be in the public domain. Users are advised to make their own copyright assessment.