

Pleading for corn

Emma A. Shoolbred to Colonel Cathey, March 30, 1863.

As you read...

Joseph Cathey (1803–1874) of Haywood County, North Carolina, was a community leader who often received requests for assistance from soldiers or home front families during the Civil War. In this letter Emma Shoolbred, who indicates that she is a widow with a son in military service, writes to request Cathey's assistance in locating corn and an ox to purchase.

The Federal Census of 1860 for the Flat Rock post office district of Henderson County, North Carolina, lists an E. A. Shoolbred, age 54, with a son James, age 27. According to the accompanying Slave Schedule, she owned 18 slaves, which she mentioned in her letter to Cathey.

— Hunter Library, Western Carolina University

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why do you think Emma Shoolbred wrote to a stranger?
2. What did she ask of Col. Cathey? Was she looking for charity?
3. What does Shoolbred's letter tell us about conditions in the South during the war?
4. In her letter, Shoolbred says she has "negro children" and their parents to feed, but she does not refer to them as slaves. What does this letter tell you about the way Southern whites thought about slavery and the role of the slave master?

Flat Rock
March 30th 1863

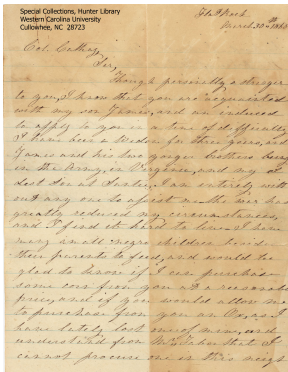


Figure 1.

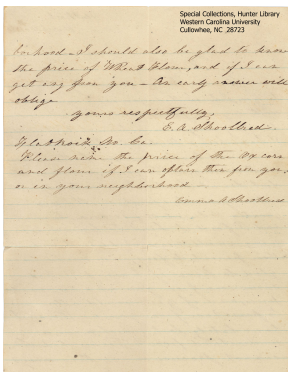


Figure 2.

Col. Cathey
Sir,

Though personally a stranger to you, I know that you are acquainted with my son James, and am induced to apply to you in a time of difficulty I have been a widow for three years, and James and his two younger brothers being in the army, in Virginia, and my eldest at [illegible], I am entirely with out any one to assist me the war has greatly reduced my circumstances, and I find it hard to live. I have many small negro children besides their parents to feed, and would be glad to know if I can purchase some corn from you at a reasonable price, and if you would allow me to purchase from you an ox, as I have lately lost one of mine, and understand from W. [?] Tabor that I cannot procure one in this neighborhood. I should also be glad to know the price of wheat flour, and if I can get any from you. An early answer will oblige

yours respectfully,
E.A. Shoobred
Flat Rock, N.C.

Please name the price of the ox corn and flour if I can obtain them from you or in your neighborhood.

Emma A. Shoobred

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