

that brought forth cheer after cheer as we crossed the bridge. When we came up to the boys who were making coffee, we thought we would get all we could eat, but again we were on short rations. They formed us in a line and gave each of us about half a tin cup of coffee and a small cracker. That was all they would let us have.

It was a week or ten days before they would let us have full rations. We were kept in parole camp, four miles in the rear of Vicksburg. While there we received the news of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The Rebel Major in charge of us got the news before we did, and he wasn't long getting started for the other side of the Black River. The Provost marshal from Vicksburg sent word to him that he had better go, for he would not be responsible for anything the prisoners did. So he flew for the other side of the river and left our men to parole us. This was on the 20th day of April, 1865.

I wish to say in conclusion, that what I have written is from recollection, except a few dates that I have in a passbook I carry with me.

WILLIAM H. ALLEN

Co. G, 17th Iowa Vet. Vol. Inft.

MUSEUM NOTES

A letter written by Abraham Lincoln to Iowa's Major General Samuel R. Curtis, dated from the Executive Mansion, November 6, 1862, was found in the Curtis Papers at the State Historical Department by Gerald Duffas, a Drake University graduate student in American History. As far as is known there is no previous record of this letter's existence. The brief note contains the following: "I feel it my duty to you as a friend to tell you that the Sec. of War and General-in-Chief inform me that charges have been preferred against you, something about speculating in cotton, so I understand, which can not be overlooked—I am sorry to write on so unpleasant a subject. The matter will be held until I have time to hear from you. Yours truly, A. Lincoln."

Executive Mansion,
Washington, Nov. 6, 1862.

Major General Curtis
My dear Sir,

I feel it my duty to you, as a friend
to tell you, that the Sec. of War, and General in
Chief inform me that charges have been preferred
against you, something about speculating in cotton,
as I understand, which can not be overlooked.
I am sorry to write on so unpleasant a subject.
The matter will be held until I have time to
hear from you.

Yours truly,
A. Lincoln

Curtis sent to the President a rather lengthy and heated reply defending his actions during the time he was on duty as commanding general at Helena, Arkansas:

Headquarters, Department of the Missouri
St. Louis, Mo., Nov. 9, 1862

His Excy.

President A. Lincoln

Dear Sir

Yours of the 6th inst. informing me that charges are preferred against me, concerning speculations in cotton is received. Intimations of this had already reached me, and pain me the more because I know it embarrasses those who command me. Without any certain knowledge of accusers, but very certain of their emanation, and no specific charges, I can only reply to rumors and imputations which I have heard on the subject. When I arrived at Helena, I allowed everybody to engage in the trade of the country; but soon found my camp infested with spies, secessionists and traitors, dealing in cotton. I therefore changed my course, and ordered none to trade, but those whom I licensed. This excluded a great number, who were exasperated, and threatened vengeance. I knew some of them to be rogues, and sneaking secessionists. Others were wealthy speculators, whom I did not know, and who could not give

satisfactory reference. Those who were excluded immediately proclaimed that I only licensed those with whom I was in partnership. I licensed all that I thought safe to go through my lines, probably a hundred; *and was in partnership with no one directly or indirectly.*

Negroes claimed cotton which they had saved from the rebel fires. Their masters generally admitted this, and I allowed them to sell. I made rogues take back bad money and give them good. I told the negroes who would be safe to sell to, and who would not be. I did the same for white people. I adjusted differences between parties who claimed lots of cotton, and who came to seek my protection; and by this same means, a thousand poor negroes, whose masters had run away, got means to which they were justly entitled, and have been saved from starvation.

The charge that I was speculating in cotton did not prevent me from doing just what I thought right and proper, and I never should have responded to that charge if it had not taken this form. I have lived too long and filled too many private and public places, without reproach, to be afraid of lies invented by rebel sympathizers and exasperated knaves generally. I do not shrink from any and all fair scrutiny. I can explain any special act of mine to the satisfaction of any honest man.

Conflicts with the rebels in the centre of the most violent population of the South, were incident to my campaign, and unavoidable. I had to deal severely with wealth and intelligence in the heart of secession.

In such a conflict, instead of support, I had some around me, who were willing to avail themselves of falsehood to destroy me.

In conclusion, may I ask for a copy of the charges. I am ready to respond in any way, by testimony or before a Board of Inquiry, or before a Court Martial.

Deeply sensible of your kindness in affording me this opportunity of maintaining my honor unsullied.

I have the honor to be
Mr. President
Your obedient servant
(signed) S. R. CURTIS
Maj. Genl.

Curtis, one of Iowa's most illustrious Civil War Generals, [See: Edwin C. Bearss, "Battle of Pea Ridge," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 8; Vol. XXXVII, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4.] apparently convinced Lincoln that he was above suspicion, for the President dropped the matter upon hearing from him.

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