

THE PALMETTO FLAG¹

Monticello, Iowa, April 2, 1910.

The Curator of the Iowa Historical Society, Des Moines, Iowa.

Dear Sir:

I have in my possession a Confederate flag which was captured by the soldiers of the Thirty-first Iowa, Company H, at Columbia, South Carolina, February 17, 1865. My father, the late Major S. S. Farwell, was at that time captain of Company H and the flag was given into his keeping. It has always remained in the family and treasured by him as his most valuable and worthy souvenir of the war. Since his death it has seemed to us, his children, that such a relic would be safer in some institution especially designed for the preserving of articles of historic interest and value, and my object in writing you is to know whether the Historical Society would care to have it and upon what terms.

The flag is about 12x16 feet in size, is of dark blue bunting on which is sewed a white palmetto tree and the half-moon. It is of the same design as the flag which supplanted the Stars and Stripes on Fort Sumter in 1861. When the Union soldiers entered Columbia, South Carolina, on February 17, 1865, this flag was floating from the State House which had been occupied by the Rebels as headquarters. The men of my father's company were the first to reach the building and tore down the flag and were about to destroy it when my father came up and asked it as a souvenir. To the best of our knowledge it is the only one now in the North. There was a similar one in the museum at Madison, Wisconsin, but was burned some years ago.

Pardon my taking so much of your time but I wanted you to know just what the flag is and what it represents. If it can be properly placed and cared for by the Historical Society I would like to know whether we must surrender all rights to it, etc.

Respectfully yours,

MARY F. CARPENTER.

Historical Department of Iowa,
Des Moines, April 5, 1910.

Mrs. Mary F. Carpenter, Monticello, Iowa.

Dear Mrs. Carpenter:

I am very sure your opinion that this institution is the best repository for the very interesting Rebel flag is correct. You have given a splendid historical account of it, and I should be glad to have you forward it at

¹The correspondence and data set out is intended to account for the possession by the state of Iowa of a large banner known as the "Palmetto flag" and to aid any concerned for or against its retention to all the considerations on the subject.—Editor.

once, permitting me to give the public press the account you have written me.

Is there any other memento of your father's service besides this in existence—personal letters, documents, pamphlets, etc., which if preserved here would tend to perpetuate his splendid memory? Be free to write me concerning these as you have concerning the flag.

Sincerely yours,

E. R. HARLAN, Curator.

Monticello, Iowa, April 15, 1910.

Mr. E. R. Harlan, Des Moines, Iowa.

My dear Mr. Harlan:

Thank you very much for your appreciative letter regarding the Palmetto flag. I wish to say that you did not reply to my questions in regard to the transfer of the flag to your keeping. I am quite desirous of knowing whether by placing the flag in the Historical Department we would relinquish all rights to it, or if at some future time it became desirable to remove it we would have the privilege.

* * * * *

I have a very fine collection of letters written during the Civil War by my father which may be placed in the Historical Department some time. I wish to retain them during my lifetime. They are valuable as giving the experiences of an Iowa man during some of the most notable campaigns of the war.

Sincerely yours,

MARY F. CARPENTER.

Historical Department of Iowa,
Des Moines, April 20, 1910.

Mrs. H. M. Carpenter, Monticello, Iowa.

My dear Mrs. Carpenter:

Without inspecting the flag and determining the probable treatment it would require to be suitably preserved and displayed, it would be difficult to specify any terms not an absolute gift to the state. The printing of labels, provision of mounting and case equipment often runs into many dollars. This and other considerations support my zeal for having such things become the absolute property of the state, and takes nothing from my desire to do the highest honor to you and to your father, as well as to those who participated in its capture and to all concerned. However, I enclose copies of a blank gift memorandum. One with its duplicate is in part filled out, and bears conditions usually made for a loan. If they are not satisfactory, kindly fill out the other blank and send to me. I wish to comply with any reasonable terms that will result in the acquisition of the flag, and the other objects, especially the

letters, but I feel sure if you were here and could see the way we treat them you would agree with me that an absolute gift is best for all concerned.

Sincerely yours,

E. R. HARLAN, Curator.

Monticello, Iowa, May 5, 1910.

Mr. E. R. Harlan, Curator, Des Moines.

My dear Mr. Harlan:

I am returning the gift memorandum you enclosed in your last letter. I have made the correction of captain for chaplain, also inserted "ten" in the blank left for time and signed same. My father raised and equipped Company H of the Thirty-first Iowa almost by his own efforts and was elected captain of the company when they were formally organized. I will prepare a brief history of the taking of the flag and send you. I have written to the only man I know that is living that participated to give me his recollections of the capture and the names of those present. I will also send a signed statement made by my father some years ago when the flag was publicly exhibited in Denver at a G. A. R. encampment.

I will not send the flag until after Memorial Day, as it is the wish of the post here and others that it should be displayed once more in our community.

Hoping this meets with your approval I remain,

Sincerely yours,

MARY FARWELL CARPENTER.

Historical Department of Iowa,
Des Moines, May 7, 1910.

Mrs. H. M. Carpenter, Monticello, Iowa.

My dear Mrs. Carpenter:

I believe your correction of my memorandum is in every respect the best. If I had anything to suggest, it would be that you forward the original to me and that I return to you the duplicate. The paper on which the original is made is a firmer and more durable kind, and will probably be here when many generations have passed, whereas the duplicate may disintegrate sooner. I like your suggestion of the account of the capture of the flag by the one survivor of whom you know. The signed statement of your father will be a precious thing indeed to have here. If possible, let me have a good photograph of him also.

Sincerely yours,

E. R. HARLAN, Curator.

Monticello, Iowa, June 15, 1910.

Mr. Edgar R. Harlan, Des Moines, Iowa.

My dear Mr. Harlan:

I am sending you today by Wells, Fargo Express the Palmetto flag.

I have not been able to get any more authentic facts in regard to its capture or those who participated. The men are now old and not very trustworthy when one tries to pin them down to statement of actual occurrences. I am sending by my husband, Mr. H. M. Carpenter, who is attending the bankers' convention this week, the signed statement of my father in regard to the flag and the original gift certificate. I think this with what I have already written you covers the history of the flag sufficiently.

Sincerely yours,

MARY F. CARPENTER.

August 12, 1910.

MEMORANDUM

The Historical Department recently received from Mrs. Mary Farwell Carpenter, daughter of the late Capt. S. S. Farwell, of Company H, Thirty-first Iowa Infantry, a trophy which is scarcely equalled by anything brought from the South during the Civil War. Captain Farwell states in a memorandum, signed, that the flag was captured by the Thirty-first Iowa Infantry, at Columbia, South Carolina, February 17, 1865; that it was a flag raised in rebellion against the Union in 1860, and retained in use until the adoption of the well known flag, the Stars and Bars. This particular flag was planted on the State House at Columbia, and the Thirty-first Infantry, which led the advance on the morning of the 17th, captured and removed it. It was about to be destroyed, when Captain Farwell received it from Oliver Welch, Private in Company H, and it remained in the possession of Captain Farwell until his death.

It is of regular flag bunting of blue, with the palmetto tree and the crescent of white cotton stuff, sewed on.

Paris, October 9, 1919.

Y. M. C. A., Treasury Dept., No. 12 Rue d'Aguesseau.

My dear Mrs. Carpenter:

A letter from Mr. Farwell suggests that I write you regarding the Palmetto flag. First, allow me to express my deep appreciation for the interest you, Mrs. Templeton and your brother have shown in this matter. Should you succeed in having the flag returned to Columbia you will make my people very happy and they too will always have a deep appreciation for your actions. To have the flag returned through my hands would mean a great deal to me, and should this be accomplished I would indeed be a proud and happy man. Following your suggestion given in Mr. Farwell's letter I have requested the Daughters of the Confederacy of my city to make formal application to the Iowa State Historical Society for the return of the flag, and if granted the flag to be delivered to you, all of which I believe is in accordance with your wishes. This application will come direct to me and I will forward it to you to be presented to the society.

Your brother and myself became very close friends and this friendship carried me through many dark and trying days in my work. One of the great things about this work over here has been the opportunity of meeting and knowing men from all parts of the United States, and I have learned to appreciate as never before that we all are simply one big people living under one flag. Mr. Farwell said that you and Mrs. Templeton had expressed a wish to have a map of Paris showing the location of the principal buildings in this city. I am therefore enclosing two, one for each of you, and I trust they are what you want.

In closing I wish to express to you all my heartfelt thanks for having agreed that the Palmetto flag should be returned to its old home.

With kind personal regards, I am yours sincerely,

EUGENE C. CATHCART.

Paris, November 18, 1919.

My dear Mrs. Carpenter:

Following up the suggestion made to me by your brother in a letter received some time ago, which suggestion was made I believe in accordance with your wishes, I am herewith enclosing a formal application from the Columbia Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy addressed to the Ohio State Historical Society requesting the return of the Palmetto flag. This application has just been received from Columbia. I am forwarding the same to you promptly. I sincerely hope the application will serve the purpose for which it is desired.

My time over here is drawing to a close. I expect to sail December 6. I will remain in New York two or three days, then join my dear family in Columbia. My home address is No. 7 Gibbes Court, Columbia, S. C. May I request that you send me a copy of your father's account of the capture of the flag, also the account by the soldiers who were with him. I hope I am not asking too much, but I am so deeply interested in this matter. I was delighted in receiving another letter from your brother a few days ago. I have certainly missed him, for I saw a good deal of him when he was over here and his friendship meant so much to me.

With kindest regards, I am sincerely,

EUGENE C. CATHCART.

No. 7 Gibbs Court, Columbia, S. C., February 1, 1920.

Mrs. Henry M. Carpenter, Monticello, Iowa.

My dear Mrs. Carpenter:

I respectfully beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of January 23, returning application of the Wade Hampton Chapter, U. D. C., for the reason that it was incorrectly made out. I first beg to apologize for the delay in answering your letter, but a two week's business trip north delayed my doing so. The application referred to has been corrected and is herewith enclosed. You will note that the same application has been used. This was done owing to the many signatures on the

application, making it rather difficult to secure a new one with all signatures just at this time. I cannot understand how the error was made, for the reason that my letter of instructions expressly stated that the application should be addressed to the State Historical Department. I trust now that the paper is in shape to be presented, and that you will be successful in seeing that the flag is returned to its old home.

I returned to the States two or three days before Christmas and of course was delighted to be back with my family once again. My experience in France was wonderful, and of course since things worked out so well I do not regret at all having gone over.

I received a letter from your brother some days ago which I have not yet answered, but will do so shortly. Please give him my kindest regards when you write.

With best wishes and kindest regards, yours very truly,

E. C. CATHCART.

The Iowa State Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa:

Having learned that the Palmetto flag which was captured from the South Carolina State Capital by General Sherman's soldiers is in possession of your society, we, the members of the Wade Hampton Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Columbia, S. C., earnestly request the return of the flag to the state of South Carolina.

A confident hope that this request will be granted is based upon the information recently received by this chapter that the family of the officer who captured the flag, Major Farwell, is sincerely desirous of seeing it restored to this state, the Farwell heirs having, we are informed, presented the trophy to the Iowa State Historical Society.

We, therefore, pray your society to turn the flag over to Mrs. Henry M. Carpenter of Monticello, Iowa, a daughter of Major Farwell, who will see that it reaches Columbia through the proper channels.

EXECUTIVE BOARD OF WADE HAMPTON
CHAPTER, U. D. C.

ALICE M. EARLE,
MALVINA L. WARING,
ALICE T. BUNCH.

OFFICERS OF WADE HAMPTON
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MRS. FRED HINES, Rec. Sec.
LULA P. HOWIE, Treas.
MRS. WALTER G. WILSON, Cor. Sec.
MRS. J. P. HOYT, Historian.
CAROLINE D. GIRARDEAU, Registrar.

Monticello, Iowa, February 9, 1920.

Mr. Edgar R. Harlan, Curator, Des Moines, Iowa.

My dear Mr. Harlan:

Ten years ago this coming spring, in April, 1910, we had some correspondence which led to my sending you as a gift to the Iowa Historical Department a Palmetto flag which had been captured at Columbia, S. C., by the Thirty-first Iowa, Company H, of which my father, Major S. S. Farwell, was at that time captain. The flag had always been in my father's possession and was greatly treasured by him, but on his death the family realized that it had a unique historical value that would be more and more appreciated as time went on, and as it was difficult to care for, decided to ask the Iowa Historical Society to give it a place among its war relics.

There was some publicity given the matter at the time and it in some way came to the attention of the Wade Hampton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy at Columbia. They wrote me asking to have the flag returned to them, but it had already been sent to you and the gift certificate signed, and I wrote them the flag was where it would always be well cared for, and the matter dropped. Now in 1918 my oldest brother went over to France as a Y. M. C. A. man and was assigned to the Treasury Department in Paris and had as a desk mate a man named E. C. Cathcart of Columbia, S. C. They became very warm friends and during their intercourse the story of the Palmetto flag came out. Mr. Cathcart was very much interested and importuned my brother to do all he could to help restore it to its birthplace. My brother referred him to me, as I was the one who had the affair in charge. I suggested that the Wade Hampton Chapter make a formal request to the Iowa Historical Society for the flag and they have done so. I am enclosing the correspondence of Mr. Cathcart in regard to the matter, also the petition of the Wade Hampton Chapter.

Now I know I have no right whatever to ask you to do this, and I do not know whether you have any authority to decide the matter, but I thought I would write you the whole story so you can judge if you may. Personally I and all my father's family are strongly in favor of returning the flag. Our government ordered the return of the captured battle flags many years ago, and at the time of making the gift to the Historical Department I was advised by the War Department that there was no museum or other place where it could be deposited as a gift to the government, and that it should be returned to the state of South Carolina if given to the government. So I sincerely hope you may see your way clear to grant this request and that I may have the pleasure of returning the flag to Columbia, S. C. Of course any expense that might be incurred I would expect to meet.

Very truly yours,

MARY FARWELL CARPENTER.

Monticello, Iowa, March 8, 1920.

Mr. Edgar R. Harlan, Curator.

Dear Sir:

A month or six weeks ago I wrote you concerning the release of the Palmetto flag donated to the Iowa Historical Department in 1910 by the heirs of the Farwell estate, the object being to return the flag to Columbia, S. C., where it originated. I have received no reply or acknowledgment of this letter, which also contained a petition from the Daughters of the Confederacy at Columbia and letters from E. C. Cathcart, a banker at that place.

I put a return on the envelope, but did not register it, and cannot think why a brief reply at least should not have been sent. I have thought Mr. Harlan may have been away sojourning in milder climes, but some one should be in charge. May I expect at least a brief reply?

Truly yours,

MRS. H. M. CARPENTER.

Historical Department of Iowa.
Des Moines, April 6, 1920.

My dear Mrs. Carpenter:

I am arranging to be in your section of the state one day this week and will come to see you concerning the Palmetto flag. I confess this is the most difficult of any situation I have ever had confront me because it is tampering with the affairs of other persons and other days. It is dealing with the conditions of colonial and state sovereignty, a subject of universal interest, and not only of our own state or of our sister states, but of our own time, and of all time.

Another indispensable thing will be a showing as to the circumstances that shall in future surround the banner. That is to say, will it be in a fireproof building whose records and materials are as safe as our own, and will the building and administration belong to a public or a private corporation? Will it belong to a city, county or state, or will it belong to a patriotic or other private corporation?

When I see you I shall ask your aid upon these points.

Sincerely yours,

E. R. HARLAN, Curator.

Monticello, Iowa, August 4, 1920.

Mr. E. R. Harlan, State Historical Department.

My dear Mr. Harlan:

When in Des Moines the last of June my husband and I had a talk with you relative to the matter of returning the Palmetto flag to the state of South Carolina. In the conversation you outlined the course of procedure and said you would first wish to ascertain whether the state of South Carolina was equipped to take as good care of the flag as in its present quarters. You made some notes on the subject and promised

to write me a letter that I could use in writing to Mr. Cathcart for information.

I have heard nothing further from you and, without seeming importunate, would remind you of this matter as I would really like to see this matter consummated during my lifetime if possible.

Sincerely yours,

MARY F. CARPENTER.

Historical Department of Iowa.
Des Moines, January 13, 1921.

Mr. H. M. Carpenter, Monticello, Iowa.

My dear Mr. Carpenter:

Senator Shecan came to me more than a week ago to take up with me on your behalf the matter of obtaining a release for you of the Palmetto flag.

I was in the middle of the responsibility of conducting the National Conference on Parks on behalf of Governor Harding and deferred the matter through sheer necessity. I enclose herewith a statement, and copies, that presents my stand upon the matter. They may be used as you desire.

Sincerely yours,

E. R. HARLAN, Curator.

P. S. On conferring with Senator Shecan he suggests very properly that the way to go about this matter is to have an act or a resolution introduced in the legislature. I shall be very glad to confer and advise as to this, but I do not wish to prepare or to propose it.

Statement with respect to the custody and title to a certain war trophy in the possession of the Historical Department of Iowa.

On or about the 16th day of April, 1910, there was sent to me, as curator of the Historical Department of Iowa, a handmade banner or flag of the dimensions of approximately 12x15 feet, and with it a card autographed by an officer of Iowa troops, namely, Major S. S. Farwell. The words and figures on the card were as follows:

"PALMETTO FLAG.

"CAPTURED BY THE 31ST IOWA INFANTRY VOLUNTEERS AT COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, FEBY. 17TH, 1865.

"THE PALMETTO FLAG WAS THE FLAG THAT WAS RAISED IN REBELLION AGAINST THE UNION IN 1860-1 AND WAS USED UNTIL THE CONFEDERATE FLAG WAS DESIGNED AND ADOPTED.

"THE 31ST IOWA LED THE ADVANCE THE MORNING OF THE 17TH OF FEBRUARY WHEN COLUMBIA WAS CAPTURED AND ITS FLAG WAS PLANTED ON THE STATE HOUSE.

"THIS HEADQUARTERS FLAG WAS PLACED IN MY POSSESSION BY OLIVER WELCH, A PRIVATE OF COMPANY H AND HAS REMAINED IN MY KEEPING UNTIL THE PRESENT DATE, MARCH 27TH, 1899.

S. S. FARWELL."

The flag and card were accepted as a gift, in memory of Major Farwell and as a commemoration of the troops associated with him and under his command, and as a token of the esteem of his family both for their father and for his soldier associates, subordinates, and friends.

The flag was at once displayed in a choice place on the walls of the Historical Department and has ever since remained one of the important features of the material illustrating Iowa service in the Civil War.

On or about the 9th day of February, 1920, surviving descendants of Major Farwell asked that the trophy be returned to them or upon their order to the custody of a certain historical or patriotic association of persons in the state of South Carolina through whose hands it shall pass to the commonwealth itself.

1. It is my opinion and I so expressed myself, orally, to the daughter of Major Farwell that the gift to the state of Iowa was full, complete, and final and that my volition ended with the safe-keeping and appropriate display of the flag.

2. That the General Assembly and no one else was empowered to transfer the title.

3. That I should ever be ready and willing to set before the General Assembly the full and complete facts surrounding the case for its consideration upon the application of the descendants of Major Farwell for the return of the flag.

4. That I could not indulge in any personal concern either for giving up or for retaining the flag, but that I felt I had an official and inherent obligation direct to the memory of Major Farwell and his loyal and valiant soldier associates and subordinates to see that the sovereign state of Iowa in releasing title to this priceless object should take assurance that it passed to the sovereign state of South Carolina and not to any individual or corporation, and furthermore that the object should be so disposed of as to forever remain as secure against fire, vandalism and all destructive influences as the state of Iowa affords this and all such sacred relics of the heroic era in our history.

Therefore, I respectfully submit this in redemption of my promise, trusting that the General Assembly may entertain the request of the descendants of Major Farwell with full and serious concern, unprejudiced and with the knowledge that it would be a precious commission to me if I were directed to investigate and pass upon the conditions precedent, I have above recommended, and if, or when conditions are complied with that I deliver to the descendants of Major Farwell the flag itself and a tender by the state of Iowa of a public function in the Historical Department where the ceremony of delivery and acceptance might be participated in by the family of Major Farwell and the properly accredited functionaries of the states of Iowa and South Carolina.

Respectfully submitted,

E. R. HARLAN, Curator.

Historical Department of Iowa,
Des Moines, March 11, 1925.

Hon. John Fletcher, Attorney General's Office, State House.

Dear Mr. Fletcher:

I enclose file relating to Palmetto flag. Also copy of our ANNALS OF IOWA with my sentiments at page 149. If the trophy should be returned, why keep others captured by our troops in '61-'64, 1898, or the World War?

Sincerely,

E. R. HARLAN, Curator.

State of Iowa, Department of Justice,
Des Moines, March 12, 1925.

Mr. Edgar R. Harlan, Curator.

Dear Mr. Harlan:

I am enclosing herewith file relating to Palmetto flag, also copy of our ANNALS OF IOWA. Attached to the same you will find copy of the concurrent resolution drawn up today, with reference to the flag.

Yours very truly,

JOHN FLETCHER, Assistant Attorney General.

Concurrent Resolution No.

WHEREAS, on or about the 16th day of April, 1910, Mrs. Mary Carpenter sent to the Historical Department of the state of Iowa a hand-made banner or flag, of the dimensions of approximately twelve by fifteen feet (12x15) known as the "Palmetto flag" captured by the soldiers of the Thirty-first Iowa Infantry from the Capitol at Columbia, South Carolina, on February 17, 1865, and which was during his lifetime the property of Major S. S. Farwell, and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Carpenter respectfully requests that the state of Iowa present the Palmetto flag above described to the state of South Carolina to be retained and preserved by that state in its Historical Department; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the House, the Senate concurring, that the Curator of the State Historical Department is hereby authorized and directed to forward to the state of South Carolina the Palmetto flag presented by Mrs. Mary Carpenter to the Historical Department of Iowa on the sixteenth day of April, 1910, together with such information as he may have with reference to the history of the capture of this flag during the War of the Rebellion and its custody and control since that time.

Historical Department of Iowa,
Des Moines, March 13, 1925.

Hon Dave Palmer, Washington, Iowa.

My dear Colonel Palmer:

Major S. S. Farwell of the Thirty-first was captain of the company which captured the great Palmetto flag, or rather seized it from the

portico of the unfinished Capitol building at Columbia, South Carolina, when that place was taken by Sherman's men. He autographed a statement verifying the above fact. After his death Mrs. Carpenter, his daughter, presented the flag to me and I entered it among our collections.

During the World War Colonel Farwell's son, in the Y. M. C. A. service in France, formed a fine friendship with one, Mr. Cathcart, from South Carolina, who renewed to Mr. Farwell a request that the Palmetto flag to be returned to that state. Mrs. Carpenter was here on yesterday and in person renewed the request. I responded that it would require a resolution of the General Assembly because I did not regard it as my own personal property, but that of the people of the state. She very kindly and cordially approved my attitude but, nevertheless, said she would ask of Representative Grimwood from her county, and Senator Rigby who represents her district, and is the son of that Iowa soldier who is superintendent of the Vicksburg National Park, that they prepare, introduce and advocate the resolution.

I just can not give up without assurance on your part and the part of any other one who, like yourself, can best speak in justice whether my duty is to resist that resolution or stand neutrally and let it pass. I do not feel warranted lone handed in raising a fuss. I do not know any Thirty-first men, or of any organization who can speak for that regiment, but surely such possessions as that in my hands ought to remain undisturbed except upon the official expression of some one surviving which would be in harmony with any expression which would have been made, say thirty years ago.

With the deepest affection to you, my dear Colonel, I am

Sincerely yours,

E. R. HARLAN, Curator.

Washington, Iowa, March 16, 1925.

E. R. Harlan, Des Moines, Iowa.

My dear Mr. Harlan:

Thanks for yours of 13th just received. Am very glad that you are so willing to care for our flag. Am glad you mentioned the circumstance relative to Palmetto flag captured at Columbia, S. C., and as I understand it was given to your department for safe keeping. I happen to know about it personally. My regiment was the Twenty-fifth Iowa and our brigade was made up of Iowa regiments, to-wit: Fourth, Ninth, Twenty-fifth, Thirtieth, and Thirty-first.

Our regiment, the Twenty-fifth, spent the night laying a pontoon bridge across Broad River and our brigade crossed on that pontoon, the Thirty-first in the lead, Colonel Stone of our regiment commanding the brigade, our regiment in rear. We marched on the wagon road direct into Columbia. The commander of Thirty-first detailed an officer and a few men and sent them with a flag to put up on the State

House and there they found this Palmetto flag, and kept it of course. It is our flag, we expect to keep it.

If they could, they would have killed the last one of us. The facts are we "licked them to a frazzle" and now they want their "Rebel" flags back for "keep sakes." Certainly our General Assembly would not think of passing a resolution ordering such a thing. That Palmetto flag belongs to the Thirty-first Iowa and it is kept in your department for safe keeping and as a "relic." Call Risley's and Chase's attention. We must not let the General Assembly make a mistake like that. The fact is our General Assembly has no business with it at all.

Thanking you and with personal regards, I am,

Yours,

DAVE PALMER.

Historical Department of Iowa,
Des Moines, April 8, 1925.

Mrs. Mary Carpenter, Monticello, Iowa.

My dear Mrs. Carpenter:

In anticipation of the passage of concurrent resolution of the Forty-first General Assembly respecting the Palmetto flag, I have taken the liberty of assembling the correspondence with respect thereto to publish in the ANNALS as a matter of record.

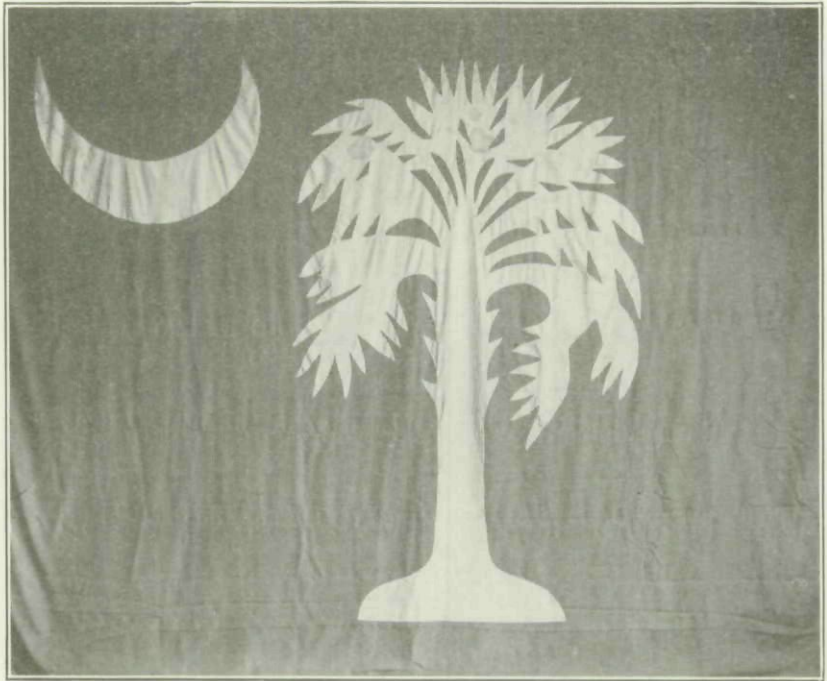
May I express my profound admiration for the motive which induced you to assemble your father's materials and bind them in the way you have done. Although Major Farwell was an eminent citizen and a valiant soldier, the evidence of these honorable attainments elsewhere than in this beautiful book, is so scattered that it makes of the book a treasure beyond price and a monument in itself the equal of anything of its sort I have ever seen. I am reading the book page by page in my quieter hours and am inspired beyond any prior experience to an appreciation of the Civil War, of the participation of Iowa men therein, and of the brigade, regiment and company in which your father so distinguished himself.

I am led to the conclusion that if our Carolina friends esteem the flag as highly as you feel and will respect it and respect its last sixty years of history, they would, next to your own state, be proper to consider as the custodians of this wonderful book, if the descendants of Major Farwell should ever consider allowing it to pass from their hands.

This whole affair has been a classic of experience in exchange of emotions with you, with your father and his comrades, and with your friends in South Carolina of the present and the past. I commit the book to you by insured parcel post with every good wish and with the deepest gratitude for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

E. R. HARLAN, Curator.



PALMETTO FLAG

Captured by soldiers of the Thirty-first Iowa Infantry from the capitol at Columbia, S. C., February 17, 1865.

Letter of Major S. S. Farwell to his home paper from the field.

Camp Thirty-first Iowa, Near Goldsboro, N. C., March 27, 1865.

Mr. Booth: We left Beaufort on January 27, destined as we supposed to make a campaign against Charleston. General Howard in an order said we must prepare for a "short and decisive" campaign, but our course soon proved to be northwest, and day after day we marched farther and farther into the state of South Carolina. At length we reached the Branchville and Augusta railroads, and destroyed thirty miles of the track with but little opposition from the enemy. Our course was still onward and on February 13, the Edisto was reached. Here the Rebels resisted our crossing, but were flanked out of their positions. In one case four companies of our men, who crossed below their breastworks on a raft, frightened away a whole brigade of Rebels who had just arrived from Hood's army.

At this point Oliver Welch of my company performed a feat well worth recording. He was out foraging and while alone he came upon four Rebels, all armed and old soldiers. They gave themselves up and he marched them two miles to our lines, feeling justly proud of his achievement.

On the 14th we reached a point within ten miles of Columbia. Our pickets were scarcely out before they were attacked by the enemy, and Lieutenant Rorick of Company G, with three or four others, were captured. The next morning the march was resumed towards Columbia, the cavalry of the enemy contesting every foot of ground as we advanced.

At Congaree Creek, four miles from the city, we found them posted in a strong position and protected by a long line of breastworks. A good many men were brought to the rear, wounded, before twelve o'clock, and it became evident that it was necessary to flank them out in order to save life. Our brigade was sent around to the extreme left, with the Fourth Iowa deployed as skirmishers. We saw Generals Sherman, Logan, Howard, and Woods in consultation, and everything looked as if some hard work was to be done. Soon the bugle sounded "forward" and to the front we went, the Fourth Iowa being in advance, plunged into a swamp which the Rebels relied upon to protect their flank, and wading in water up to their waists, a distance of 150 yards, when, emerging, they found themselves in rear of the Rebels and, opening fire upon them, the latter quickly retreated, saving the rest of the brigade from taking such a cold bath. The Rebels fired the bridge, but did not succeed in destroying it before our advance came up, who quickly repaired it and we crossed over and took possession of a fine range of hills a mile distant, where we camped for the night.

In the morning it was found that the Rebels had retreated across the Congaree River. Our columns were soon in motion following them up, their progress rather accelerated than retarded by the vigorous shelling the Rebels gave us from batteries planted across the river.

We were soon opposite the town, on high ground, with artillery planted so that it could be shelled at our mercy.

It was one of the finest sights I ever beheld to look from the point where we were drawn up in line of battle upon that beautiful but doomed city. Columbia is located upon high, swelling ground, and the churches, depots, hospitals, arsenal, and splendid private residences surrounded with evergreen trees, while above all, the granite State House, not yet completed, loomed up the most majestic object in the lovely picture, altogether presenting a scene which few towns can rival. Some Rebel soldiers were on duty in the streets and a wagon train could be seen hurrying away from the town. A few shells from our guns accelerated its movements and soon cleared the streets of occupants but no signs of surrender appeared, and General Sherman did not deign to send him a demand for the place to be given up. I can conceive of nothing more terrible than our appearance to the citizens of Columbia as we stood upon that hill only a mile distant, drawn up in line of battle, while the shots from our batteries told them but too plainly that they were at our mercy.

No effort was made to place a pontoon bridge across the river opposite the city, on account of its extreme width, and towards evening we moved up the stream above the point where the Saluda and Broad rivers form the Congaree. On the road we passed Camp Sorghum where the Rebels confined for a considerable length of time 1,600 Union officers. They had been confined without shelter and, to protect themselves from storms and cold, had burrowed in the earth, covering the holes with branches and trees and throwing dirt on top. The stakes which marked out the dead line to step beyond which was certain death, were still standing, and a Negro pointed out to us the graves of eight officers who had been shot because they had, without thinking, approached this line with no intention of crossing it or disobeying the regulations of the camp. The threats of the men, as they beheld this scene of suffering, cruelty, and murder, were not loud but deep. The fate of Columbia was sealed.

We crossed the Saluda River at sundown and reached the bank of Broad River which still intervened between us and Columbia after dark. About ten o'clock the pontoon train arrived upon the spot selected for throwing across the bridge. The current was swift and the river wild [wide], so that without the presence of the enemy the task of bridging the stream was a difficult one. After repeated attempts, a rope was stretched from shore to shore and, about two o'clock in the morning of the 17th, the first boat load of troops were ready to cross. Two boats were lashed together and sixty men placed upon them. I was directed by Colonel Stone to accompany them, and as the picket fires of the enemy were plainly visible on the opposite bank and a large light showed their camp to be close at hand, we were not without some apprehensions that we would be met with a warm reception before we

would be permitted to land and form a line. The boat glided quietly across the stream until within ten feet of the bank where she struck a hidden rock and, for a few minutes, could not be moved. They were moments of suspense as we were at the mercy of our foes upon the shore, but she was soon released from her perilous position and the party sprang ashore, formed a line of skirmishers, while the Rebs retreated across a mill race in our front without firing a shot.

Other loads of troops were soon over and in an hour the entire regiment was across, the men going to work as fast as they arrived throwing up a breastwork, which rendered the possession of the landing a certainty. In an hour after sunrise the entire brigade had crossed and formed in order of battle. The order to march was then given, and under a sharp fire from the enemy our line was soon advancing and driving the Rebels before it. The Thirtieth Iowa was the first to break the Rebel line, capturing thirty. The Rebs then fell back to the top of a range of hills nearly a quarter of a mile distant. We were then ordered to take the top of the hill and then halt. The boys went forward with a will, and as they got near the top went at a double-quick, raising a yell and firing a volley which made the Rebels skedaddle in every direction. The day was won and no obstacle intervened to prevent our march into the city. The line was reformed and it was found the regiment had but three wounded—Captain Herring in the groin, L. M. McFadden, Company G, in the right arm, and William Gussenger, Company A, in the hand.

The brigade was hardly ready for another advance before the cry "The white flag is coming!" was heard, and looking towards the city we beheld a carriage approaching, bearing two large white flags. Colonel Stone advanced a little way to meet it and an old man alighted and announced that he was mayor of the city of Columbia, and that he came to surrender a defenceless city of old men, women and children into his hands. Colonel Stone accepted the surrender of the place and, taking the flag of our regiment, he unfolded it to the breeze on the top of the carriage, over the head of the rebellious mayor, then formed his brigade, the Thirty-first Iowa in advance, and started to occupy the nest egg of the rebellion. As we approached the city we were fired upon by a body of men which the mayor claimed did not belong to the Confederate Army; be that as it may, it was another instance of the striking bad faith of our enemy. Upon entering the city crowds of Negroes greeted us with the most extravagant expressions of joy, and as we neared the center the scene was one which will never be forgotten by those who beheld it. Thousands of the colored race were congregated in the streets through which we marched, all in a perfect ecstasy of delight. Some were shouting "Glory! Glory!" "The year of jubilee has come!" "We are all free now!" and similar expressions greeted us on all sides. One young girl, so white that only an experienced eye could detect African blood, seized Colonel Jenkins by the

arm saying, "Yesterday I was a slave; today I am free. We are all free now." It seemed as though we were an army of deliverers instead of hated conquerors, yet we could plainly see that the men of wealth and influence, who first concocted this wicked rebellion, and the haughty, defiant secesh women, stood aloof from all these demonstrations and viewed us as anything but friends.

While the scenes above described were being enacted, our old flag was unfurled to the breeze on the State House. The soldier is seldom enthusiastic, but on this occasion I saw no one who was not crazy with delight. To think that the old emblem that had been torn down, despised, spit upon, and every possible indignity heaped upon it, for four long years, was now vindicated and waving in glory and triumph over the State House where the first convention met to dissolve the Union, was an event so inspiring that we could only wish that every lover of the old Stars and Stripes could have witnessed and shared our triumph and exaltation. While the excitement was at its highest pitch General Sherman entered the city, accompanied by Howard and Logan. Our brigade received them with rousing cheers which General Sherman acknowledged by raising his hat and riding along our line with uncovered head. He had never before looked so grand, so noble, so much the hero and conqueror, as he did at this moment while riding in triumph through the streets of Columbia.

Nearly 2,000 Union officers had been confined here within two days of the time we entered the city. While moving them from the prison to the depot quite a number had managed to escape from the guards and secrete themselves. As soon as they found we occupied the town they began to come out of their hiding places. Their joy, as they met the boys in blue, exceeded anything of the kind we ever before witnessed. It mattered not whether they had ever met before, their arms were around them at once, and tears would flow from eyes that scarcely ever wept before. As they told of the horrible sufferings they had undergone, and the indignities and insults which had been heaped upon them by these people, they instilled a hatred into the minds of the soldiers against these old Rebels they had never felt before.

Soon after dark the alarm of fire was given, and the flames could be seen springing up in the outskirts of the town. The wind was blowing a gale, carrying the flames over the heart of the city and, in less time than it takes to write it, the fire had obtained such headway that it was impossible to check the conflagration. Two additional brigades were called out to assist in checking the fire, and Generals Sherman, Howard, and Logan appeared on the streets to inspire the soldiers to the work by their presence, but it was of no avail. No human power could save the city. The fire raged through a length of nearly a mile and half and a width of three-quarters of a mile, burning nearly every church, every business house, the old State House itself and hundreds of palatial residences. In the morning only smouldering ashes, toppling walls and blackened chimneys, told where the beautiful city once had stood.

After remaining long enough to destroy what cotton and other property had escaped the fire, we again started on the march, forming the rear guard of the army. There is little that occurs on the march that can be made interesting to relate. Our march was made very slow and tedious by the muddy roads, caused by the heavy rains that were constantly falling. Mile after mile of corduroy road had to be built each day before the wagon train could be moved. Provision and forage for the men and animals were obtained in good supply and there was but little suffering on account of lack of food. Horses and mules in great numbers were captured. Four times the number were brought in as were needed to replace those worn out in the teams. A great many Negroes came with us from Columbia, and their numbers reached several thousand before we reached Fayetteville. They had a hard time of it walking through the rain and mud, clothed in rags and barefoot, most of the women carrying babies while a lot of little ones would be running by their sides. It makes me sad to think of the fate that must befall many of these poor little things before they can be placed in a position where they can help themselves. There is no more worthy object of charity than is now presented by these poor freed people.

We met with no further opposition until the army reached Cheraw. Here the Seventeenth Corps, being in advance, soon drove them from their works and occupied the town. The enemy had made this a storehouse for powder, etc., taken from Charleston, and in destroying this an explosion occurred which killed and wounded quite a number of men. Ira Dodge of my company was run over by a frightened team and very severely injured. As soon as the crossing of the Great Peedee could be effected we were again on the road, and on March 11 reached Fayetteville, N. C., a place of great importance to the Rebels, but which they had deemed prudent to evacuate. The old United States Arsenal was at this point, and had cost the government a million of dollars. It contained the best of machinery for manufacturing muskets, ammunition, etc., and was invaluable. It had to be destroyed, however, the walls battered down, and Sherman left it a mass of ruins. Here we had an opportunity to send away the sick and wounded and a few letters but did not receive any in return.

Our course was forward again through rain and mud, but we encountered no serious opposition from the enemy until the 19th, when they made a heavy assault upon the Fourteenth Corps. We could hear the fighting going on all day, but our corps continued its march towards Goldsboro until we passed the point where the fighting was going on, and camped. The next morning we marched back upon a road parallel to the one on which we had been traveling, and nearly due west. Our advance had not gone more than three miles before they came upon the enemy and drove him rapidly three miles, when the Rebels were found behind works. A sharp skirmish fight ensued in the afternoon, our brigade being engaged and the Twenty-fifth Iowa losing twenty-four killed and wounded. The different corps were concentrated as rapidly

as possible, and soon a line of battle several miles in length was formed, and every facility given General Joe Johnston to "fight it out on that line." During the night heavy works were thrown up, and the next day the enemy were driven out of their skirmish pits preparatory to a general charge when everything should be ready. The Rebels made desperate attempts to retake their skirmish pits, but never more than partially succeeded. Our regiment lost five wounded during the day. At night the Thirty-first was sent forward as advance pickets, covering the front of the entire brigade, and the duties we had to perform in the darkness and rain reminded us of night scenes we had passed through at Chickasaw Bayou, Arkansas Post, and Lookout Mountain. We were within a hundred yards of the Rebel main line of works, and our duty was to watch and resist any attempt they might make to retake the works they had lost during the day. They did not make the attempt, however, and before daylight it looked probable that they were evacuating and moving off. A skirmish party was immediately sent forward and our regiment was the first to occupy their works. We followed them a short distance and then returned to camp, where the following communication was read to us from General Sherman:

"The General commanding announces to this army that yesterday it beat, on his chosen ground, the concentrated armies of our enemy, who has fled in disorder, leaving his dead, wounded and prisoners in our hands and burning the bridges in his retreat.

"On the same day Major-General Schofield, from Newberne, entered and occupied Goldsboro, and Major-General Terry, from Wilmington, secured Cox Bridge Crossing and laid a pontoon bridge across the Neuse River, so that our campaign has resulted in a glorious success after a march of a most extraordinary character, near 500 miles over swamps and rivers deemed impassable to others, at the most inclement season of the year, and drawing our supplies from a poor and wasted country.

"I thank the army and assure it that our government and people honor them for this new display of the physical and moral qualities which reflect honor upon the whole nation.

"You shall have rest and all the supplies that can be brought from the rich granaries and storehouses of our magnificent country, before embarking on new and untried dangers."

Could you have seen the boys as they crowded around listening to the words of their chief, many of them barefooted, with their feet chapped and swollen, their clothes all ragged and torn from the long march through the swamps and brush, you would not have wondered at the shouts of satisfaction with which the last sentences were received. But we are all right now, and the memories of this campaign, of the day we entered Columbia in particular, will ever be among the brightest recollections of our army life.

S. S. FARWELL.

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