



F. B. GOODRICH, THE TRIBUTE BOOK, 1865

i seen some hard times as well as you

When Jesse Wilkerson joined the 13th Iowa Infantry, Company C, he left behind his wife, Sarahett, to run their farm near Hamburg, in southwest Iowa. The couple had two children, Maryett and Hatty, and another on the way. The letters between wife and husband reveal a gradual shift in decision making regarding the farm, a change in dynamics experienced by many farm couples during the war. As Sarahett waits for Jesse's letters, which are often lost or delayed, she wonders if he even knows that a new baby has arrived.

november 24th 1864 Iowa

Dear Sarahett

I wonce more take my pen in my hand to write you a few lines to you and I hope that they my find you all well . . . you must manige the thing the [best] that you can you had better hire hands and git the corn gethered out before it wasted and the wheat threasht the oats you had better sell rite away before they git wasted you had better not sell any of the wheat for you my need it before I git back fore war is very uncetin . . . I think that you had better sell yur horse fore he is not safte for you to handle and two horses is enouf fore you to bother with you must be carful and not make your self sick. I wish that freeman would stay their this winter . . . you had better not sell any more corn then you can help for

it will bring a good deal more in the spring if you need money sel some of the cattle I much rathe staid at home with my famley then wet to war but it was my lot to go & I will trust in providence that I may git back . . .

Jesse S Wilkerson

November 29th 1864

Dear Sarahett..I will send you my likenss to day for it may be along time before you see me again for ware is uncertin you know if the year pases off as slow as the few weeks has bin to me since I left home you may look to see me gray hedid do not think but I often think of the Dear ones at home Maryett & hatty . . . their vishon is before me all of the time at night when I lay down to sleap I think of them in the morning . . . you must take good care of them & tell them to bee good girles untill I come back you must take good care of your self and not make your self sick . . .

Jan 8th 1865

Dear Jesse . . . I hant got much news to write only that you have got a yong air to our house it is a girl and the prittist one that you ever seen for a yong babe i wish you could see it the other two is well and thinks the

world of the baby . . . I would give all the money I ever seen or ever xpect to see if you could come home a gain . . . write and tell me whether you want your oxen sold or not freeman thinks that I had better sell them in the spring their is some one here most ever day to by cattle but i wont sell them till you want them sold . . . Freemon is going a way and i dont no how i can git along with the things i dont no [who] i can git to haul my wood for me the boys asks big wagis and i cant aford to pay so much for so little . . . I want you to send me a name for the baby. i want to name her after you if you will let me i think that Jessie is a girls name . . . Sarahett Wilkerson

Jan 15th 1865

Dear Jesse . . . I wrote to you last week and told you that you had a nother girl at home she is two weeks old yesturday I wish that you could see her she is a pritty baby the pritiest one that you I ever had Maryett & Hattie wants their paw to come home they look for you ever day and cry because you dont come . . . I read all the news that I can git So I can find out where Sherman army is the news is now that peace is a going to be maid now I hope it is so that you will come home a gain but I never expect to see you a gain you dont now how me and the childern miss you . . . I hant got the wheat thrashed yet the machene wont come to trash it wont come I dont no what to do with it . . .

January 21th 1865

. . . [The baby] is for weeks old yesturday I went to mothers yesturday it is bin first time i was out sence she was born the folks was all well I have got the wheat and oats thrashed at last their is a bout 42 bushel of wheat . . . I got one of holands little girls to live with me I dont want to leav the childern with the baby a lone while i am out a milken the cows and doing the chores I fraid something might happen to the childern . . .

January the 31 1865

Dear Jesse . . . I wrote you a letter yesturday and I got yourn to day and you said you had not heard from home yet . . . you have got a babe here it is a girl i expect you would rather it bin a boy but they cant draft a girl and take her a way from me . . . I want send you the babys likeness so you can see how she looks when she was little you may never see her . . . feel bad you was took a way from home so quick from your family and home you dont no how i feel a bout it I am sory to hear that you dont git enought to eat down there . . . I paid Ben what you owed him and paid freemond what you owed him . . . it is a bed time it is a bout twelve oclock I have the sore eyes and cant see to write much I dont expect you can read it so i will come to a close . . .

March the 5th 1865

Dear husband . . . well I rented the place . . . to John Daily and his brother . . . I paid your taxes it was eighty nine dollars . . . they say that the taxes was not bin paid sence 1862 I fond the receipts that was paid 1863 . . . you have got a big girl at home I wish you could see it I want you to send it a name it is two months old it was born the 31 of december . . . it is lonesom to stay a lone I hired zack litle to work two monts for me and git my wood . . .

March 13th 1865

. . . Dear Sarahett . . . you may cook me a forth of july diner for I think that I will be home by that time . . . you must enjoy yourself the best you can an not worry yourself abot me for if I do have to leave my bones down hear it will be in a good cose take good care of the little ones at home i wish that you would send maryett too schoole as much as you can I can not tell you what to do with any of the things their fore I do not know how you are agiting along . . .

march 26/65

well Dear Sarahett . . . I recieved 4 letters from you to day and it gave me grate pleasur to hear from you . . . I am glad to hear that you are all well and especiley that we have got another heir and it is prety to in the bargin I was afrid that you would make yourself sick atring to do too mutch I would rather that you would hire some one to help you do the work you can . . . as for seling the steers you had better wait untill you . . . hear from me again . . . I am glad to hear that you have rented the place out you must have them take good car of the horses . . . I got to my regiment on the 25 an now I think that I will git you letters reglar their is a good prospect that we will stay here 3 or 4 weeks and I think that by that time peace will be mad now in regard to my voting for father Abreham I thought that he was the man to vote for and I still think so . . . tell maryett and hatty to be good girls and mind their maw and I will bring them something home that is prety . . .

April the 2 1865

Dear husband . . . I am sorry to think that you haft to go in battles for I am a fraid you will git kiled or wounded some way I am a fraid i will never see you a gain on this earth if I dont I hope that wee will meet in heaven whare their will be no more sins to be forgiven . . . the baby was boren a newyears eve and mother staid with me four days I was sick four dayes before it was born . . . I tell you i seen some hard times as well as you do . . . Hatty says her paw is in the army a shooting rebels. She can talk evrything now Mary she looks for you on evry steamboat . . .

Aprile 11th 1865

Well Dear husband . . . you told me you was in a big ol battle I am sorry that you haft to go to sich places . . . I wish I could be with you to take care of you when your are sick. their is no one that you now their to do any thing for you I expect you often thinks of home and dream a bout it [too]. . . I will never for git the day you left here I cant content my self one minit at a time sence you left home i am a worring a bout you all the time i am a fraid the Childern wont see you any more they are a talking a bout it all the time little hattie says her paw is coming home on a steam boat some day but Maryett sais she douts it very much whether you come or not she tells hatty that you dont want to see her then haty cries a bout it . . . i sold two hunderd buchel to day at eighty five cnts a buchel I thaut i had better sell it before it got down to low . . . the childern calls [the baby] Jinnie they want you to send her a name they say that they will call her that till you come home . . . somt thinks ther will be peace but i dont i think that you will haft to kill all of the rebels first i wish it was down there to help so to git through with it quick for i am tired of it . . . we send our love to you and all of the poor soldiers from your wife until death . . .

Aprile [16th?] 1865

. . . Dear Husband . . . we heard that Abraham Lincon was kiled I hope that it hant so but I gess it is so . . . I wish you would come home for i am lonesom without you here i never see any satisfaction while your gone you dont now how me and the childern miss you here . . . I have my garden maid most i hope you will be here to eat it i will plant some water melons for you and save them till you come . . . I will send you five dolars in this letter . . . it will help you a little to git your tobaco and diner I shant sell any of your cattle we have nine calvs now I have a brand made to brand them it cost me three dolars to make it i am going to have them all marked before they run off i expect the most of them will be drove off on the planes thier is a good many herds here . . .

May 21th 1865

Dear wife . . . it is the genarl supostion that shermans army will be mustard out as fast as they can . . . it will not be many weeks before I will bee home with you and the childern . . . if we are dicharged hear and paid off I could make a good thing out of it if I had five or six hunderd dolars by buying goverment mules for their is a grate many hear and will be sold cheap if I new wether you have sold the steers or not I would know more how to make my carkelations . . .

June 14th 1865

Dear Husband . . . I am sory to hear that you didnt git

your discharge for I now that you was out of hart to think you didnt git one I got out of hart when i read the letter . . . I want you to write and tell me how much hay you want put up and how you want it put up it will cost you a bout two hunderd dolars to put up . . . the bugs is very bad here they have took most of the garden here an potatoes I plant-ed two buchel and a half of potatoes i have plenty of peas now to eat I wish you was here to eat some peas I have got eleven nice pigs and twelve calvs and plenty of chickens . . . [Maryett] dont go to chool their hant any here She is got big enough to wash dishes and she thinks she is a woman Hattie is got to be quite a big girl . . .

July 5th 1865

Dear Husband . . . I have bin sick for the last too weeks but I am a giting better now. I had the neuralgy in my face and head . . . the chintz bugs has comence on the wheat now it hant ripe yet . . . [Freeman] is here part of the time and part of the time i am a lone he has a good deal of his time a runing a round with the girls I can git hay cut for one dolar an acre and hands two dolars a day and two and a half I wish you could be home to tend to it . . . cattle is low now hunter sold his four year old steers for one hunderd and thirty dolars a yoak . . . [the baby] has two teth and can set a lone I expect she will walk the first time you git to See her Hatty she cryes to see her paw she sais he stais to long Mary sais she thinks you mite come home to her . . .

July 18th 1865

Dear wife . . . by the time that I git back their I will have traveled five thousand miles or upwards and some of it the hardes kind of traveling . . . our offer-cies is very slow . . . we mite of been home by this time if they had tryde since the order came to muster us out but they are agiting big pay and are not in any hury about giting out if half of the curses has had any efect they will go to hell sure . . . tell little Hatty not to cry and worry about her paw for he will be home before long and he will not leave her any mor for the rebles is all whiped now . . . the cuntry has gon throug heavy triles and came out all right with flying Colers and the nation has caus for grate rejoysing . . . I think that I will be with you in a few days give my respects to all inquiring friends Yours as ever . . .

This letter concludes Jesse and Sarahett's Civil War correspondence. Jesse was murdered in a barroom in 1869. The complete set of 43 letters between Jesse and Sarahett Wilkerson is housed in Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries, University of Iowa, Iowa City. For online facsimiles and transcriptions, go to: digital.library.uiowa.edu and then search for "Wilkerson letters."