Letterbook
Volume BG
Ryder Family - Letter book with the Letters of Alfred G & John E. Ryder, January 1861 to July 1863

[Note: letters are coded to correspond with the letter book notations: BG-1] [Courtesy of Bob Grimm, Nov. 2000]

and are filed chronologically in 'Correspondence' series.
The following letters were filed in this letterbook, but did not have corresponding notations:

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*Alfred Fay (2nd Michigan Calvary, Co. B)

**John G. Frey (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania)

***Henry Hoisington (24th Infantry, Co. C)
The Letters Of
Alfred G. Ryder
And
John E. Ryder
From January 1862 to the
Time of their deaths in July 1863
At Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

THE CIVIL WAR

LETTERS OF
ALFRED G. RYDER
and
JOHN E. RYDER
from
January 1862
to the
time of their deaths
at Gettysburg in
July 1863
FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO OUR FATHERS BROUGHT FORTH ON THIS CONTINENT A NEW NATION CONCEIVED IN LIBERTY AND DEDICATED TO THE PROPOSITION THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.

NOW WE ARE ENGAGED IN A GREAT CIVIL WAR TESTING WHETHER THAT NATION OR ANY NATION SO CONCEIVED AND SO DEDICATED CAN LONG ENDURE. WE ARE MET ON A GREAT BATTLEFIELD OF THAT WAR. WE HAVE COME TO DEDICATE A PORTION OF THAT FIELD AS A FINAL RESTING PLACE FOR THOSE WHO HERE CAME TO PERISH THEIR LIVES THAT THAT NATION MIGHT LIVE. IT IS ALTOGETHER FITTING AND PROPER THAT WE SHOULD DO THIS - BUT IN A LARGER SENSE WE CAN NOT CONSECRATE - WE CAN NOT HALLOW - THIS GROUND - THE BRAVE MEN LIVING AND DEAD WHO STRUGGLED HERE HAVE CONSECRATED IT FAR ABOVE OUR POOR POWER TO ADD OR DISTRIBUTE THE WORLD WILL LONG REMEMBER WHAT WE SAY HERE BUT IT CAN NEVER FORGET WHAT THEY DID HERE - IT IS FOR US THE LIVING WHO Fought HERE HAVE THE UNFINISHED WORK WHICH THEY SO NABLY ADVANCED IT IS RATHER FOR US TO BE HERE DEDICATED HERE TO THE GREAT TASK REMAINING BEFORE US - THAT FROM THESE HONORED DEAD WE TAKE INCREASED DEVOTION TO THAT CAUSE FOR WHICH THEY CAME THE LAST FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION - THAT WE HERE HIGHLY RESOLVE THAT THESE DEAD SHALL NOT HAVE DIED IN VAIN - THAT THIS NATION UNDER GOD SHALL HAVE A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM AND THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE SHALL NOT PERISH FROM THE EARTH.
FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 1905.

In Memory of Alfred G. and Harriet A. Ryder, after whom the Grand Army Post W. R. C. of Newburg was named.

(Read at the Decoration Day Exercises by Mrs. John Bennett.)

Fourty years have passed since the carnage of battle ceased, and the emblems of civil liberty were again restored. But we can never forget the fearful cost, the thousands and hundreds of thousands who marched away with colors flying down to the gory fields to die for eternal right. During those anxious, exciting, and long remembered days when every patriotic heart and eye was turned to Washington and the southern states, there came a call from our President for 75,000 men. Soon another call came for 300,000 more. Men and boys came from here, there, and everywhere, all over these prosperous, glorious, northern states.

Among the first to respond to the call from our President, Abraham Lincoln, were these two brave sons of George and Henrietta Vinton Ryder, both forever in my memory and in our district school. Alfred attended school in Plymouth and also at the State Normal at Ypsilanti. All the years up to 1861, with the exception of the time Alfred was away at school, we were spent in a pleasant, happy home with fond parents, sister and brother.

But they went forth like heroes from the pleasant surroundings as voluntary sacrifices wherever duty called and their steadfast devotion to principle and loyalty to the flag.

The first to answer his country’s call was Alfred G. Ryder. He was born July 17, 1841, and enlisted in the First Michigan Cavalry, Company H, under Captain Hourigan, Detroit. They were mustered into service Sept. 13, 1861, with Colonel Brodhead commanding. In looking and reading over their dear old letters home and the memorandum which they kept while soldiers nearly up to the day of their death, we find that selections from these will be far more eloquent to explain their nobility of character and bravery of heart than anything that could be said or written. The following is a copy of the first page of Alfred’s memorandum, written the 11th day of Sept. 1861. I dedicate this book to my special use in writing of articles for friends, sentiments which I consider worthy of remembrance, facts worthy of distinction well knowing in the varied circumstances they may be placed, how thoughts and facts may arise beneficial through their novelty in after days.

From the plat for the gratification of a natural curiosity which exists in all men. Though I may be killed, I hope this book may be kept.

After being in the service, he further writes: Camp life is more delightful to the fancy than to the experience, easier to imagine than to realize. Oh, Spirit of war, happy is it that earth is thy home. How dreadful thy afflictions, how desperate, how terrible. God of Mercy, have mercy upon men. How strong are the bonds that unite friend with friend and how terrible their disjunction. None can feel as a soldier, for to him is left the parting of friends whom he knows not again he shall meet on this broad earth. Often have I witnessed, silently contemplating its sadness, mothers and sisters giving their last farewell to beloved father and brother. I’ve seen the tears roll down their cheek, sad with the parting anguish, and so have I seen wives and mothers of infant children who stood around them, looking their agonizing farewell on husband on whom they depended for their daily bread. Alas, one narrow line is drawn that links the sunet with our dawn. Thus full of farewells to the dying and mourning for the dead. I spent my 21st birthday amid rain, mud and bullets on the banks of the Rappahanock River.

The following is a letter written by Alfred from his point of Rocks Point, Sept. 4, 1862, (about one year after he enlisted): I have this morning for the first in a long time an opportunity of writing you a few words. The time that has passed since I wrote you before, I can very truly tell you has been very eventful, indeed. I have since been a prisoner of war in the hands of the secessionists, but am now on parole and am to start for Annapolis this afternoon. I can tell you I have been in war for a few months where the rifles crack, sabres clink and cannon roar, and am now sound and well, a very good story for me. The 29th of August was a fearful day for me. Our battalion headed a charge on the rebels that day and the support being withdrawn left us few hundred fighting thousands with nothing but the sabres. You can imagine Alf. cutting right and left at the rebels till some of my rebel friends from the rear took an opportunity to knock me from my horse. When the whole column galloped over me, I thought I was gone sure, but after they got over me I got up and it was as much as I ever could do. I tried to catch a horse but could not, when the rebels again took note of me and sent the balls flying, one burning my face clear across and taking off some of my under lip that I sometimes used to think was a little too prominent, but that is nothing. We fought hard but they surrounded us and took us prisoners and gave us nothing to eat for 68 hours, for the simple reason, I think, that they had nothing to eat themselves. I know nothing of the other boys, Parley, Farwell or Burr, but trust that they came out all right.

Exact from a letter dated April 17, 1862. We were out scouting. The rebels were hiding behind them surrounded us.
We expected to take the heights at once. We had been on duty all day, and our fellows were cut down like grass and the Rebels worse than ours. The Rebels fell down, their arms quite fast. As we crossed the river Major General Williams of the 14th Virginia under fire and General Wadsworth on the other side, each wing of our men was as fast as we could get them to lay down their arms and used every strong language to emphasize his words. We were all round to the guns on them. I was close to my mother here. I made my last hope in this: may the Rebel of the last battle.

On the morning of the 26th, June, 1863, I was called into the spirit world forever. I was called to camp here and learned that the 1st Cavalry was about two miles from where we were and that we had tried hard but that was not going to stop me if I could get away. So Noble and I got a pass from the Colonel and started to hard work to get there on account of the pickets, but with some bruises we managed to pass the last one. We reached the field and saw the smoke of battle. The war was at an end. We stayed till late at night, but the best visit I ever had in my life talking over old times and what we had passed through in the war. But last part of our day was coming again soon. Alfred had tried hard to get a pass to come here, but could not get one. I have heard the cannons fire all this morning and expect we will have a great battle soon. It is too late to let it come and we will look for the best. And another, if we have to, hope and pray to God that the war may come to close soon.

Extract from a letter written April 29, 1863. Camp on the battlefield. The 24th was called to west of Rappahannock and opened the battle. Our men were ready to imagine the sights and sounds, our poor boys fell by the fire of those rebel guns. The Rebels were in full force on the left, and they had a chance at us. We fired at them as fast as we could, and shouted with all our might. We killed a number of them and took 103 prisoners. We had been under fire now for seven days. We don't sleep, any too much.

A letter was received from Elder May, chaplain of the 34th regiment. He wrote about how he had buried John with his own hands and in my labor among the wounded in all the various hospitals. I found Alfred of the 1st Cavalry, who was severely wounded on the 3rd of July. I was converted with Alfred several times, and he did not expect to live, but was patient and calm and considerate, ready to go and wishes and expects to meet you all on the other side. We are sure that both boys carried with them through their service in the war, Elder May sent home to their mother.
Alfred has sharpened his sabre for us to take the enemy down.
Almost certainly that Captain Farrell was not the small boy

[no letter following]
Alfred Kearney with\nFort Miege regiment of\nRangers has been\nthis alongside
Al partes regi menta
perdamos Alemania
mente en Maryland
John writes that he heard about the defeat and the two Regiment-Complaints of bad treatment by officers and recruits. He said...
March 5, 1812

The food was adequate during the winter and there were 200 barrels of flour from the enemy.
Alfred mention'd Ossy and mentions Ossy's two mine's the miner's house is due. We close to there off the hard labour of war.
Alfred tells me Mother how much a letter is appreciated at the front.
All free laborers of every age and sex are hereby regarded as free and unrestrained, and are entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of citizens.
Alfred received his first letter from duty.

As for Aunt Charity,

Note - Dick was then eight years old. He evidently was a friend of theirs then. Read the manner remarks and page three of this letter.
At first with fear I ran a sample order of 50 miles with an ambulance, receiving considerable accession of a battlefield intake into one year after my release with the draft land in 1862 from...
Although taken over 1300 miles south of a battle in which I served, while under charge of General Emser in a heated battle, I was told "Imagine little Jeff, contemptible and weak like the rebel." (Exciting!)
Abraham Lincoln

No. 7.  A letter from the President of the United States, to the Congress of the United States, on the subject of the war with Great Britain, and the proposed peace negotiations. Washington, D.C., March 4, 1861.

The President, Sir: I have the honor to submit to you the following report, which I have been directed to make, in obedience to a resolution of the Senate of the United States, of the 25th ultimo.

I have the honor to report, that the Executive, after a careful examination of the subject, finds it inexpedient to recommend the adoption of the measures proposed by the Senate, as a means of obtaining a treaty of peace with Great Britain. The Executive believe, that the interests of the United States, and the peace of the world, would be better secured by a course of conduct which shall be free from all appearance of partiality, and which shall be calculated to meet the demands of the belligerents, and to ensure the rights of neutrals.

The Executive, therefore, recommend, that the Senate of the United States, when they shall have considered the report of the Secretary of State, shall proceed to consider the subject of the war with Great Britain, and the proposed peace negotiations, and to report the result of their deliberations to the Senate of the United States.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States.

[Signature]

Washington, D.C., March 4, 1861.

[Note: The text is written in cursive and the handwriting is difficult to read. The text appears to be a report or letter regarding the war with Great Britain and the proposed peace negotiations. The President, Abraham Lincoln, discusses the necessity of a fair and impartial approach to the war and the need to consider the rights of neutrals and the interests of the United States.]
John has been enlisted
Eugy was heard from
Alfred deserts and
soldiers going to the rear.
Mentioned several from Plymouth.
Sept. 20, 1862

[Handwritten text]

[Signature]

[Note: The handwriting makes it difficult to transcribe accurately]
John takes the士兵's life in an impressionable manner.
Oct. 2, 1842

[Handwritten text in cursive]

[Handwritten text in cursive]

[Handwritten text in cursive]

[Handwritten text in cursive]

[Handwritten text in cursive]
Preservation of a letter written by Henry Jenkinson and enclosed in a letter to his father.

Note: He wants grand-father Ryder to take care of five men.

[no letter following]
No one has been ill. Complain of food. Bury a forth of corn meal and make a cake.
Dec. 1, 1862

John december 20th
in a tent under covert
weather. Does not
feel nice.
To him describe the
Glamour of an army
To this little Brother
Charles.
Dec. 31, 1862

On the corner lay,

something not crazy

very interesting.
January 2, 1863

To the Company: Please take instructions from the Governor of New York state as you have in the past. In three weeks, Brock.
January 11, 1803

I have received a letter from Charles. Stayed a short time in Philadelphia.
Alfred wants Charles to write from a letter to have something in the distance.
February 2, 1863

Al frank talk of friend parents
Our tender trip to their old
Home in York State

Men towns on the Hudson
Not some knew some of them

Mariner (Capt) Whiting
Alfred pleased with a letter of business from home, Topic
John got a letter two
21st first regiment killed
Artillery fire, His Corps
lay end by a Gaffett
To the end of winter four winter
Camp. North sickness and
death in four regiments:
Tells of Cape Nast, illness
and patients from highly.

Note: Cape Nast winter sickness
in Plymouth.
March 25, 1803

John doesn't like the chimney man who is acting Cape Fear. He says he stays in the south only the browser and winter seamstress and she is a mother on board their trips to New York for a horse driving team among other teams.
John tells his wife she should go back to her husband. Make them go to thefeplace. Have them give the treaty back to France.
Colts' regiment have been in review to their distress. The men are nearly over. The men and those in the stock yard have had good care.
Alfred Campa Farley (Hall's father) is extremely ill. Does not think his volunteer regiment would get along well with drafted men. Advised to get a copy of 'The Advertiser' of Bibb County - New Campaign about to begin.
No drilling on Sunday.
Expected tricky the Rebel leader to visit them.
Operation of Easter morning.
Unsigned document under at April.
May 1, 1870

Alfred has been trying to have his boat checked for freeness of engines. He is petitioning for a new license for their company.
Newspaper carriers and all hand want a firm letter to take care of the money which Bickley and Pugh, and others want to send to their store. Have furnished their own boxes and give special box for them.
Although your Grandfather and I only took a day to visit our mother,
there was some discussion of it being stolen. The letter is for
the address of the letter to
his father.
Written by Henry Hainsworth, 24th of their Regiment, killed or mortally wounded in recent battle. Hope you're well. Wrote something? Bought for 200.

Note: Battle mentioned was at Chancellorsville on May 2-3.
Act the Master of the Battle at Frederick's Battery. This was
of corn planting time back to
Brown, near counties, a
beautiful and majestic place.
June 9, 1863

John describes a desperate battle. Says "tell Stanley in will come the home and bring back of his great freedom." 77.
Al first passes through the White Sulphur Springs, then as near as female nature will recently heard from Action.
June 20, 1843

John described their continuous movement and a flowing river which formed the death of men. There was all unnecessary equipment away. No one the men in the convict. Scape of the nation and death.
June 28, 1843

At last write two days before this writing. Had five
and a half visits today and
Nelles. Some a little late
also write. Expect a battle
in a few days. Winter
terribly as all is confusion.