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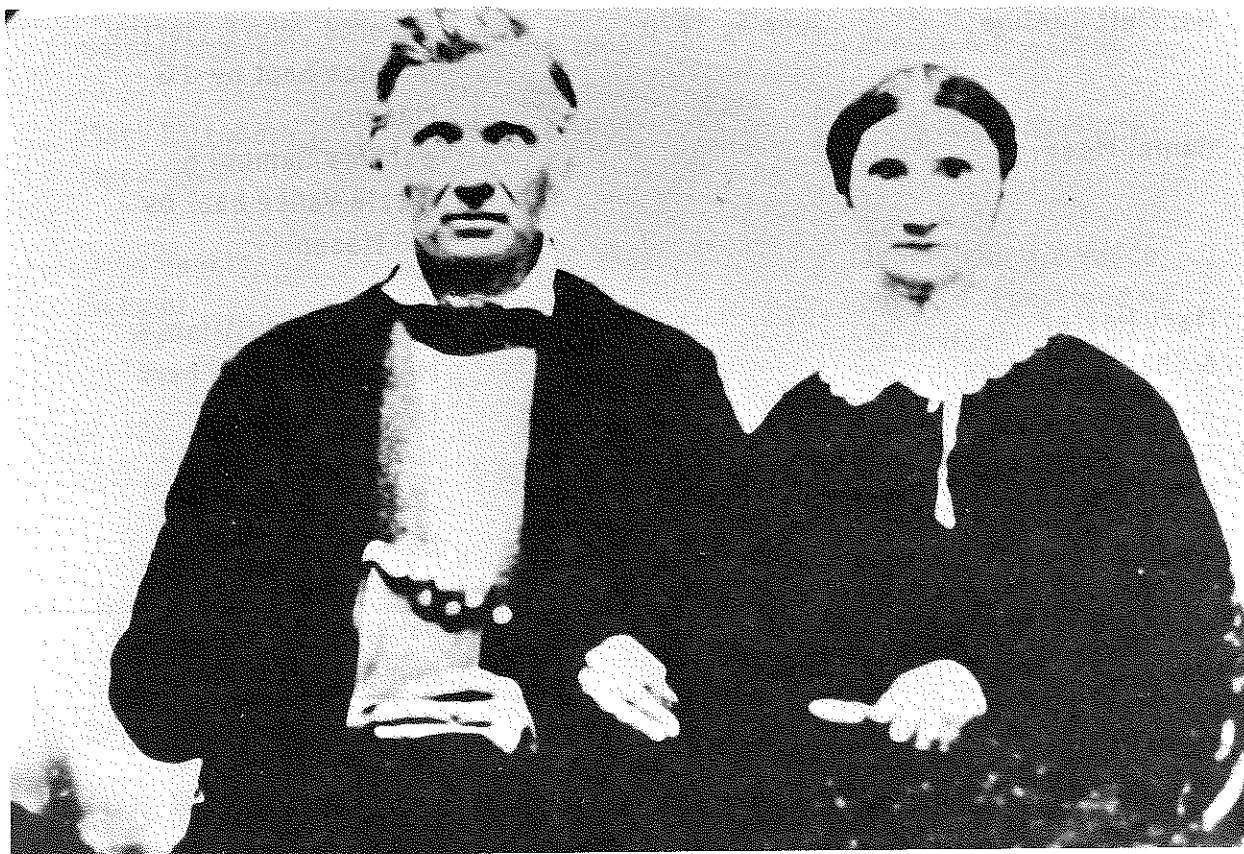
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A SOUTHERN PART OF EAST TENNESSEE

by M. Archer

Histories of the Civil War have often indicated that East Tennessee was largely inhabited by Union sympathizers; the letters that follow reveal one small part in which the ties with the Confederacy were strong. No reason for this can be found in the letters themselves; possibly the explanation lies in the family background.

About 1845 Felix Wilkerson Wells and his wife Ann had settled in Greene County on a farm at the foot of Bay's Mountain, about 14 miles northwest of Greeneville. He (the father in these letters) was the son of George and Mary Wells. The Wells and Ernest families are mentioned frequently in the histories of Methodism in Tennessee



FELIX WILKERSON WELLS AND ANN COX BARRON WELLS, HIS WIFE

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The oldest of the nine children of Felix and Ann Wells was George Hendley, born in 1834, the writer of the first letter in this series. He was a minister in the South Carolina Conference, first appearing in its records in 1859. The wife, whose illness he describes, died August 25, 1862, a little more than a month after he wrote this letter.

The second son was Gustavus Barron, born in 1836; he also was a minister and did not have military service. His son Lloyd is the Loyed mentioned in a letter of S. H. Wells. Lloyd was born September 12, 1862; in 1864 he and his mother were probably with their grandmother at Marvin while Felix, Gustavus, and William were away from Tennessee, in hiding because of the strong feeling against Confederate sympathizers.

The third son, Benjamin Wofford, mentioned in the first letter, was attending Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina when the War began; he entered the Confederate Army in Co. E, 13th Regiment, S.C. Infantry in 1861 and died in Richmond, Virginia [Winder Hospital] October 29, 1862, probably of pneumonia.

Mary Margery Virginia, born in 1838, is the Virginia or Ver of these letters; apparently she was a beloved sister, the one upon whom the brothers particularly depended. In 1863 she married Thomas Lee, and they were probably living in North Carolina in 1864.

Maria Rebecca, born in 1840, is not mentioned specifically in these letters. She had lived in Spartanburg with her Aunt Maria Barron Wofford after Benjamin Wofford's death in 1850. There she met and married in 1858 Thomas R. Agnew of New York.

Charles Henry, born in 1842, had entered the Confederate Army in July of 1861; a Lieutenant in Company F, 29th Tennessee, he died in September 1863, as recounted in the letter from S. H. Wells.

Samuel Humphris, born in 1844, was a member of Co. H, 31st Tennessee Regiment Reynolds' Brigade, Buckner's Division.

Morris Hanson, born in 1846, is the Mosy or Mos in these letters. He was a member of Co. C, 31st Tennessee Cavalry Volunteers.

William Capers Septieme, born in 1847, was too young for active service; no doubt, however, he was kept busy at home.

Most of the relatives and friends mentioned in these letters are not definitely identified. It is interesting to note the affectionate mention of the servants, some of whom are buried in the family cemetery, Antioch.

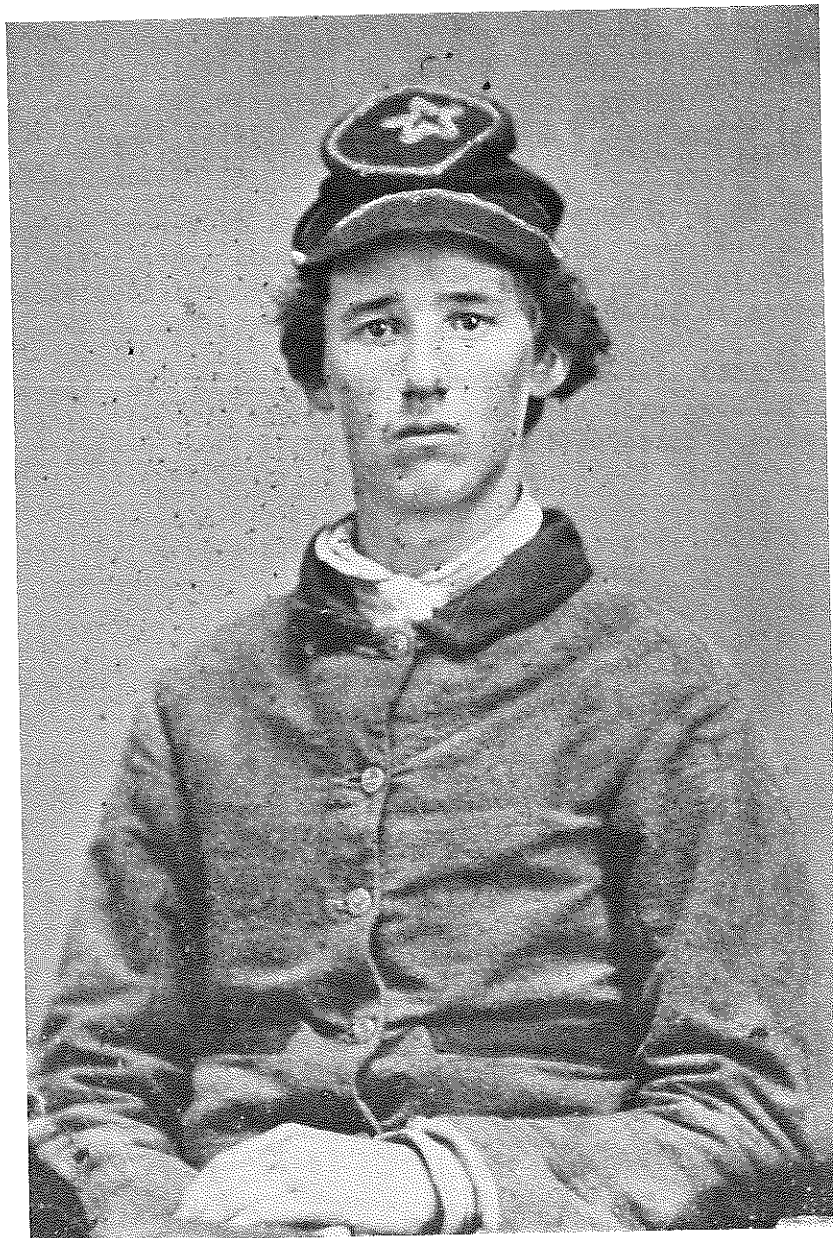
No attempt is made here to trace the movements of the Army mentioned by the writers. The purpose is simply to give the thoughts of these four loyal Southern sons about what they saw and heard during that time when, in danger themselves, they knew of danger at home.

There has been no correction of mistakes in spelling and punctuation except as necessary to make meaning clear. These men had little education, and they were writing in difficult circumstances. They had had the promise of a college

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education; the war made that impossible for them. However, in later life the three brothers who remained on the family farm--Samuel, Morris, and Capers--had a great interest in education, an interest which greatly influenced some of their descendants.

Felix and Ann Wells and five of their children--Samuel, Morris, Capers, Benjamin, and Virginia--are buried in the Antioch Church Cemetery, along with many other relatives. Land for the church was given by Felix Wells.



SAMUEL H. WELLS

31st (W. M. Bradford's) Tennessee Infantry, Co. H, C.S.A.

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Hartsville (?) S.C.
July 22, 1862

Dear Mother:

I have waited long & anxiously for a letter from home. Two months have passed since I wrote & still I hear nothing from you. Have the traitors stoped the mails? Do write soon. I have had nothing but affliction since I wrote. Lizzie has lain helpless in bed several times given out to die, & now although she has more ease for the past few days yet I have no hope of her recovery. God only knows all I have pased thro. To see her die, would be more relief than anything else unless her sufferings could be alleviated. I never dreamed any one could suffer as she has done. In all this she is happy in God, ready, willing anxious to depart.

Have you heard anything from Charles? Where is Samuel? Poor Wofford, I see in my paper this morning, the casualties of the 3d S.C. Reg. Company F, Capt. McGowan, B. W. Wells missing. It must be Wofford. If you have any news from him write at once. [Bluford W. Wells appears on the list of casualties in the action before Richmond June 29, 1862. He died at Charlottesville December 21, 1862.]

Truly this war is spreading a dark shaddow over every household, but after all, I would rather bury my kindred & die upon their graves than live the subjects of the hell deserving Yankee government. If Lizzie recovers or dies, & the war continues my rifle shall avenge the blood of my brothers poured out an offering for liberty. Thank God we have whiped them soundly.

Write me all the news. Write at once, for you know not how anxious I am to hear from you. Give our love to all the family white & black. God grant we may yet see each other.

Affectionately your son

G. H. Wells

September 29th 1862 Camp 5 miles from Danville

Dear Mother

I have not had a chance to send my letter as I will write more, we have been marching all the time untill to day. I have been rested only 2 days since I left home but I am well and hearty as ever I was. We are now on the turnpike between Langester and Danville on Dix (?) River We stoped to rest and wash our cloths, I expect we will move on in the morning. Since we got out of the mountains into the blue grass country it is the finest country I ever saw, the people are most all Southern, the Ladys cheer us all along the road, the confederate flag floats from almost every house, water is very scarce and in places the ladys had water seting along the road for us to drink as we pass, an old man passed along our lines yesterday and as he passed he would say "God bless you boys I love you all" I tell you we can march a heap better with such encouragements, they are the gladdest folks to see us ever you saw; yesterday

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we stoped at a house while 3 young ladys sung for us; I know you will be uneasy a bout me but they will knot send letters out for some reason. I have heard to day that Yanky Morgan is captured and of several other victorys and that france has recognized our independence. I will write no more at present.

S. H. Wells

October 1st 1862

We can send our letters at last so I will by saying that we marched out here to Camp Dick Robinson about 10 miles on quick time, they say we will stay here several days--I heard we are in about 30 miles of the 29th regiment. Brag had a fight and whiped the enemy a few days ago. I do not know whether the 29th was in it or not, we drawed our money yesterday but I am afraid to send it by letter from here, I want you to write often whether you get a letter from me or not.

I remain your Son until death

Samuel

Vicksbury Miss Jan 1 1863

Dear Mother

I seat myself to let you know where and how I am. I am a way down here where there has been so much hard shelling done, the city shows some signs of it but not a great deal. I now writing about a mile from town and about 4 or 5 hundred yards from the Yanks an pickets, some days they have heavy firing here but to day there is none here but a mile or so up above here they (ours) are shelling slowly but they are not doing much, they had a battle here the other day, our folks whiped them badly, I seen the Yanks burying their dead yesterday under a flag of truce. Pitts (?) regiment is here about a hundred yards from us. I seen John Wells last night, he is well but not satisfied, Jake Wells is about half a mile from us but I have not seen him for we get to go about very little when they are expecting an attack. Some how I do not believe they will attackt us, if they do I am tolerable certan we will whip them, this is the best fortified place I have seen, I believe, and if they come on land they have such swamps to pass through that they cannot pass our batteries.

I will give an account of our travel, we left Loudon on Sunday night and came to Dalton, Georgia about one oclock that night and stayed until Wednesday morning, then on that day we went to Atlanta against sundown and changed engine and came to West Point, that night, on Thursday we went to Montgomery Alabama and got there about midnight, on Friday we started for Kinshaws Landing, I blieve is the name and did not get there until Saturday night, that is twenty miles above Mobile, we went aboard the steam boat but did not leave until eleven oclock and I went to sleep and did not wake up untill we were nearly there; by moon light it looked like the bay was full of ships, some of them were our gunboats but count [couldn't] tell any thing about them, on Sunday we left Mobile and went to Meridan Mississippi, then we heard they were fighting hard

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down here and we could not get transportation and the col said if we did not go on they would think we were cowards so we pressed the Mail train and five companys of _____ got on it and came down through Jackson to this place, the other companys have not come yet.

Write soon

S. H. Wells

Camp near Shelbyville March 19 1863

Dear Mother,

It is with pleasure I seat myself to write to you again to inform you that I am well, hopeing these few lines may find you enjoying the same blessing. I received your ever welcom letter on the 15th last which gave me much pleasure in peruseing its contents & to find that you were well & enjoying yourself as well as you possibly could these war times. I received a letter from Ver the other day stating she and husband was well. We have had pretty weather now for over a week, the peach trees are out in bloom, it looks so beautiful, spring is upon us & we are still laying in camp when it looks like we ought to be at home plowing & sowing oats, there is rumer that Old Rosey is pounding back towards Ky but it is nothing but a rumer. Mrs Ingle & Bailes is well [Mrs is plural of Mr] John Cox is here in Capt. Bushong company, he seems to be very well satisfied. I would love to have got G. Weems, I was glad to here from Samuel, I must close, give my love to father & the boys, remember me to all enquireing friends, remember me to the servants, excue bad writing for ive been drilling the recruits & it makes my hand tremble, write soon, receive the love of your affectionate sun

Lt. C. H. Wells

Dear Brother Mosy

I was glad to get a few lines from you, I expect you are lonsum since Ver left you, you ought to go to see the girls. I don't blame them for not coming to see you but I tell you I dont think I have spoke to a young lady in six months. I dont know whether I could speak to one now if I had the chance, tell Fenton & Lary I could get them the belts if I could get them to you. I must close as my paper has run out, receive the love of your Brother.

Charles H. Wells

Camp near Shelbyville Tenn May 3/63

Dear Mother

It is with pleasure I seat myself to answer your very welcome letter which came to hand yesterday, it is all ways gratifying to here from home, for that reason I write often. My health is still very good, the health of the regt generally

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is good espeshelly the old soldiers, there is a great diference between the old soldiers & the new one I have not received a letter yet from Ver, dont know the reason, got one from Samuel on the 30th of Apr, he says he is well says he hasnt received a letter from you for some time, his letter was date Apr 19th, we have had a considerable revivele in our Brigade, friday knight there was some 15 or 20 morners, some profesed, there is 25 to be baptised today, 11 by emersion an the rest by sprinkling, I think if we would be better, rely more on a hier power & less on our vallor we would whip the Yankeys quicker, there don't seem to be much prospect yet of a fight, it may come unexpected, when it comes it cant supprise me much for Ive got so nothing supprises me, tell Ver she must write. You can read Mos letter & see how I encouraged him, I dont realy believe he ought to go but if he will go persuade him to come here, I can help him along with his load as I dont have anything hardly to carry, keep him out as long as you can Ma, there is no news of interest here, Capt. Johnson has come back, I was glad to see him for I had all that work to do in the company makeing out pay rolls and reports it kip me buisy I tell you. I must close, give my love to Father, Brothers & sisters, receive the love of your affectionate Sun

C. H. Wells

remember me to all inquireing friends remember me to the Servants PS I forgot Mrs Ingle Bailes & Cox is well, tell there folks, tell John King & [illegible] howdy for me, remember me to all the Lisles, this is nothing but my foolishness but in fact tell them I want to marry when the war is over

[The following was written on a small piece of paper; there is no date or place.]

If you will send me these articles I will sent you 50 dollars as soon as I can [illegible] I forgot, I want a quilt as light a one as you have to be warm, tell Ver if she can get me a veliece or a small bag I will send her 10 dollars for it and if she cant get it by then send me a good satchel I must close, it snowed last night about 3 inches deep and is very cold this morning

2 Lt Co G 29 Tenn redgement

C. H. Wells

Athens Tenn Oct 29th 1863

Dear father

With pleasure I begin a letter to you, not knowing when I can send it off I would have written before but I did not know where to direct to untill I see Capt. Johnson. I expect you have got his letter telling you of dear Charly's death, he was shot in the head in Saturdays fight at Chickamauga and lived until the next Saturday. I know but little concerning his death I have been with the 29th several times but none of the boys could get off from the battle field to see him but he died at his post the boys say he was very steady, he never was known to swear, he was loved as a brother by nearly the whole regiment, the company brags on him and say a better or braver officer never

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was, his gold finger ring he pulled off and put in his pocket book before he went into the battle and told one of the boys if he was killed to take it out and send it to mother and there are some other little things, his canteen I wish you had, I am afraid they will be lost, his pistol Capt sent by McGuffin, the other things he has not got yet I do not know how long we will stay here, they are scattering our brigade along the railroad, a courier brought the news to day our forces had occupied Loudon and were crossing the river there we have heard that our forces from up the country had advanced as far as New Market. I hope you can get home soon, I am getting very anxious to hear how the Tories have treated them there, if they have treated them bad and I am spared to get back they will rue it certain, it is shameful the way some of our boys have done, several of the company have taken the oath and some have joined the tory thieving companys. I expect they will curse the day they done it yet, we have only seven of the company here yet, I have not much news to write so I will close give my love to all friends, direct to Reynolds Brigade 31st regt Athens E Tenn

S. H. Wells

To F. W. Wells, Nov, 1st

Dear father

I have the chance of sending this to the office I will say I am in good health, we have a nice house to stay in and are living well write soon

Yours

S. H. Wells

The letter above was published in an Athens, Tennessee paper about 1965. Family records do not show whether the items mentioned by S. H. Wells were ever received by his family. The burial place of C. E. Wells is unknown.

National Archives and Records Service shows that S. H. Wells was among those captured with the 31st Tennessee Regiment at Enterprise, Miss., July 4, 1863. He signed a "solemn parole under oath" on the 10th or 20th day of July 1863. He was furloughed July 22nd, 1863. Later he was in General Longstreet's advance on Union-occupied Knoxville.

Mossy Creek [now Jefferson City] Nov 28 1864

Dear Mother

I with pleasure seat myself to write you a few lines and let you know that we are well and hope these lines may find you all enjoying the same blessing. T. Luster is going up to Green after some boys who are absent without leave and I will send this to Mr. Hawkins with some captured booty, We could have gotten plenty of every thing had of had time but we keep pushing on and stragglers got everything nearly we have 4 pairs of socks each, 3 good blanks each and gun cloths and I got a good comfort, Morris got a good horse and saddle, I would

love to have gotten sugar and coffee for you but you know it would not do to stop and plunder. Mother we are both needing pants and I need a coat and some of the boys have acted so bad in staying at home that it is doubtful whether either of us can get home for some time and Morris said you would have them for us in a few days. If it is ready will you please send them to Mr. Hawkins against the 2nd of Dec. and Thomas will bring them to us. The firelight is so dim that I cannot write well so you must excuse mistakes. I will close, give my love to sister and kiss Loyed for me, when you see Virg give my love to her. I would like to see her but cant get off. My love to the servants and receive the love of your son

Sam H Wells

Dear Mother,

Brother has written you every thing and it is so dark that I can hardly see the paper, I want you if you have it to send me a piece of soap allso a viel of ink that I left in the press I send a little flag, give it to little J Martin, I cant see to write, receive the love of your affectionat son

M. Wells

When S. H. Wells was writing this he apparently did not know that on Nov. 13 Hood's Army of Tennessee engaged the Federals near Bulls Gap; the site of this battle was for many years a favorite hunting ground for those interested in Civil War relics. It is not far from the Wells' Mountain Home.



Mary (Mollie) Wynn Orr
Daughter of David Murphy and Rebecca Wynn Orr
(March 13, 1855 - Sept. 24, 1921)
Married April 13, 1873

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Mountain Home [The name of the Wells home at southern foot of Bays Mountain]
March 11th [The year, not shown here or on envelope, was probably 1872]

Miss Mollie. W. Orr

Dear friend

You will doubtless be surprized at geting a letter from me and it is with timidity that I pen these lines but you know "a faint heart &"; so I write to ask a correspondence if agreeable to you, also if I may come to see you...If you say I may I will try and come at the time of the conference at Station (?) Creek, and have the double pleasure of a visit and the meeting there is a difference in the time published--the Bishop says 11th of April I believe--which is the right time? hasn't this been a dreadful winter if it had not been for reading music etc I don't know what would have become of us the weather has been to bad for visiting or any out door enjoyment, but I hope spring is here though it is raining now. We have had some days of beautiful weather.

I do so wish for flower time to come those beautiful unfaden children of paradise I fear my house flowers are most ruined by the cold this winter.

Hoping to get a favorable answer soon I subscribe myself

Your true friend

S. H. Wells

The editor was told by one of Samuel's daughters that the first thing Samuel did when he brought his bride from Virginia to the Tennessee home was to take her on a tour of the garden; by that time, April 13, 1873, there would have been some spring growth.

Continued from page 198

SHUNEM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 1853

Children Baptized

		Marthy Vance bapt by L R Gaines
p 155		
Charly Bartlet	May 28, 1876	
James King	"	
Arthur Kenedy	"	by parents Samuel Vance & wife bapt by L R Janes
Jane Rankin	May 1877	W T Mathes & wife
William T	May 1883	Mrs. F . C. Mathes bapt by W H Lyle