

Martha Johnson Letters Transcriptions
from
Johnson Family of Peacham, Vt.,
Papers, 1854-1904
MSA 185

Introduction

This is a collection of correspondence and related documents from the Leonard Johnson family of Peacham, Vermont, written between 1854 and 1904. The bulk of the collection is comprised of letters written by the daughter, Martha Johnson (1822-1871), who served as a teacher for the National Freedman's Relief Association in the Beaufort/Port Royal area of South Carolina from 1863 to 1871. The collection was donated to the Vermont Historical Society by Leonard Johnson's great great granddaughter, Betty Wilkinson of Barre, Vermont, in 1997 (ms. acc. no 97.10). The collection is stored in one box and occupies .25 linear foot of shelf space.
Beaufort, S.C. Mar. 11th, 1863.

Biographical Sketch

Martha Johnson was born in Peacham, Vermont, on September 17, 1822. She died in Beaufort, South Carolina, December 24, 1871. She was the oldest of nine children. She never married. Martha received her education at the Peacham common school and the Franklin Academy in New Hampshire. She was received in the Congregational church in 1842. In 1855, Martha took a job as matron of the female department in the workhouse located on Blackwell's Island, New York. She returned home that same year due to her mother's illness and subsequent death. From 1859 to 1861, Martha taught at an industrial school somewhere in New York. In 1863 she received a teaching commission from the National Freedman's Relief Association to teach newly freed slaves in the Union occupied area of the South Carolina lowcountry. She remained in this position until her death in 1871. She is buried in the Episcopal church cemetery in Beaufort, South Carolina. Biographical information is contained in MSA 185:4 and 185:5.

Transcriptions:

Beaufort, S.C. Mar. 11th, 1863.

Dear Parents

I little expected, when I received your letters, that I should be in Dixie land, or it was answered, but so it is - I am here. I suffer, although I hardly know whether I am in the body or out. It had been so long since I had made my application to the Freedmans Association, and had heard nothing from it, that I had given up ever hearing from them but, I was summoned to appear before the Clergymans committee for examination. I

went, and was accepted, and Mary also, but it was so late in the season, she did not like to take Olie south so I concluded, I could come alone, and here I am. There were two other lady teachers came with me but both entire strangers to me and one another until we met on the steamer that brought us here. We left N.J. on Thursday the 5th and arrived here yesterday the 10th after an unusually long and rough passage. The vessel was very heavily laden and had head winds all the way. I was very seasick for two days and obliged to keep my berth and for the other three - was not able to take scarcely a bit of food, for I still felt the nausea although I did not throw up. I am now so tired and weak. I should be on the bed if it was not for writing letters. So they will go tomorrow, on the vessel we came in, as I may not have another opportunity to send for a week or two and I am anxious to let you all know where I am so I can hear from you as soon as possible. For it will be a long time, to me any way, to wait for letters, and I expect my friends will like to hear of my safe arrival in Dixie, when they knew I was on my way there. I am at the residence of Mr. French, called the Mission House, where all the Teachers stay until they receive their appointments for the different places around here. Where mine will be is as yet unknown to me but shall know in a few days. Beaufort is supplied for the present with Teachers so we shall probably be sent back on some of the Plantations. Mr. French has just come in and says he has good news. One of the largest Plantations on Port Royal Island, belonging to one of the worst of rebels, was bought this morning by the Slaves belonging on that place, and a neighboring one, with money saved from their own earnings of past summer - they paid seven hundred and ten dollars for eight hundred acres. Government is trying to secure all the land she can for the benefit of the Colored Race. I am in one of the most ancient looking houses, large square rooms, immense fireplaces that will hold big logs, beautifully carved Mantel pieces and cornius, elegant pieces of furniture, but all having the marks of War, defaced and broken. I will give you next time a description of the town and the appearance of the country around but I am so tired now I cannot write much more for I am weak from seasickness as well as fatigued from seeing and hearing so much that is new, and interesting. It seems as though I had lived a month in the last six days. I begin to realize something of War where I am now in a sense I never did before. It is as warm as June. Yesterday there was no fire, except in the kitchen, but this morning it was raining and we have fire in our rooms. But now the sun is coming out and it will be very warm again, while you are shivering with cold and the ground covered with snow. Don't fail to write soon so I shall [have] it before many weeks. Love to Grandpa Bailey and Emma. Remember me to any of my friends who may inquire and accept the same from your daughter Martha. Direct to Beaufort S.C. care of Gen. Saxton. Pass this around to Clarissa as I don't think I shall be able to write to her by this stemer [sic].

Martha

Perryclear Plantation Apr. 11th, 1863

Dear Sisters

I went to Beaufort on Thursday and found four letters. Two from Mary, one mailed at N.Y. and one from Washington containing your letters. One from Lill and Lib. Also one from Pa and one from Lib written in answer to mine written the same day I wrote to you. Didn't I have a good time reading them! I do not think I was ever in a place where I have felt the full value of letters before, but I can here and hope my sisters will remember me often. I am now well and happy and am glad I came. I only wish Carrie was here, but do not think it advisable for her to come till after the warm weather is over as much as would love to have her here. I am out on a Plantation 10 miles by land and six by water from Beaufort - came here in a row boat for there are but two or three carriages on the Island so I cannot go by land, unless on horseback. I am not permanently located here. Mr. and Mrs. Root, the Superintendant and wife, came here last Christmas (are Mass. people). While on their way, spent a few days in N.Y. and boarded at Mr. Newten's where Mary and I were at the time - they called at Mr. French's, the Mission House, the Saturday after my arrival four weeks ago today and invited me to come and stay here a few days, until I should receive my appointment. In the meantime Mrs. Root was sick and I went into her school on Monday and have been here ever since. I do not know how much longer I shall stay. If our forces had not evacuated Jacksonville, Florida, Mr. French intended to take five or six Teachers down there. I presume I should have been among the number. 4 Teachers have come down since I came, and two when I did, and in the present state of things on this Island Mr. French is somewhat puzzled to know how to dispense of all in a place that he thinks safe. He told me the other day he had made arrangements to send me and a Miss Wakeman that came down when I did on a Plantation near the Ferry leading to the main land. But when the Expedition started for Charleston he did not think it safe just now, for the Rebels might attempt to cross the Ferry, as most of the regiments here were out on the Expedition and they might make the attempt, as it is not more than a mile and a half across the river and, as proved, it was as well that we were not sent there although we should not have been injured if we had been there. On Thursday morning I was awakened about five o'clock by the sound of Cannon - seemed very near. I was up and to the window very soon - the atmosphere was full of smoke and the sound of the canon continued for some minutes. Then we saw a blaze and the colored people said the boat was burning for they could see it from their houses. It proved to be a wooden Gun boat lying at the Ferry - the rebels fired into her and the second shell struck the powder magazine and she was burned. We could hear the rebels shouts of triumph as the boat was burning, for it was not more than four miles from here. It is reported that the Captain was asleep when the rebels first fired and not a gun on the boat was loaded. Smart Gun boat was it not. The Pickets on this shore said they heard the rebels at work all night getting their Artillery down to the shore - heard the car whistle which brought them within a few miles of the shore, and the Gun Boat lying near the rebel shore knew nothing of it until they were fired upon and they could not return the fire for they had no loaded guns. One man was killed (scalded) and four of five wounded. I can see from the window where I am writing into "Secesh" country not more than two

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miles from here, across Broad river. I am on one end of Port Royal Island. I do not know how long it is but it is ten miles to Beaufort and may extend as far the other way from B. or farther, but it is narrow. A point of Lady's Island is not more than half a mile from here when the tide is low. It seems as though we might almost step across. Mr. Root has three Plantations under his charge. Twelve Negro cabins on this place and as many more on the other two places. The men and women work in the field, and both receive the same pay except a few who are too old and infirm to labor- they are supported on the Plantation. They have nearly done planting corn and sweet potatoes and are preparing the ground for planting cotton, which is to be planted this month. There is a certain number of acres of corn, which is to be cultivated for the Government, that is for the use of the Superintendent and the horses, mules, and cattle on the Plantations, for which the colored people are paid twenty five cents per day for their work and each man woman and child has a certain number of [illegible] 4 of which make an acre, to cultivate for their own use, and to take the best care of their cotton ground. They work very industriously and save their money most of them. They are in the field early in the morning but most of them get through their tasks by three or four o'clock - they have seen so much hardship that they are not strong as northern men. No person has the energy or strength to labor here that they have in cooler climate. And another thing, they do not have a kind of food to make them vigorous for Hominy is nearly is nearly all their living. The Government gives them rations of flour or hard bread, a small portion for each one, and they buy a little Molasses and Meat occasionally. They all keep fowls, but sell all their eggs and chickens as the soldiers give them thirty cents per doz. for eggs and in the same proportions for their chickens. And they seem so anxious to save enough to buy them a little house some day. There are exceptions of course, as among white people, some are lazy and don't care to do anything as long as the Government gives them enough to eat and something to wear. It is an exception, not the general rule. The Government will not give them rations after the present crop is harvested, so the lazy ones will have to work or suffer. Very few of them could read when Mr. and Mrs. Root came here, but now there are eight to ten women that have learned their letters and can read a few verses in the Bible. To be able to read the Bible is their great desire. They come in after a hard [sic] days work to read a few verses and then go home and read it over again by their pitch pine fires until they can read it quite well. They seem so grateful for a little instruction it is a pleasure to teach them. The children are quick to learn as white children and as full of fun and mischief. I never think of their black skins when I am with them and have become as much attached to them as to any white children. I shall be very sorry to leave them. I hope to be located permanently soon, but I am very happy here. Mr. and Mrs. Root are very pleasant and as she has not been well for some weeks she is very glad to have me here so her school will go on. They are trying to arrange it so I can stay with them and go across to Lady's Island and teach a school there. There are several Plantations without a Teacher and no place for a Teacher to stay permanently, but a house that is near here, or in sight, could be fitted up for a school. I do not know whether he will succeed. It would be a nice boat ride every day for me. I was glad to hear that you were all well. You say that it sounds strange for me to write of June weather. It seems strange to me to think of you as shivering with cold and covered with snow. The Roses and a variety of flowers are in bloom in the garden. Had ripe strawberries last Monday. Blackberry bushes are growing

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all over the Plantation where it has not been ploughed this year and they are half grown so we shall have them plenty next month. Peaches as large as hazelnut and plums also. Locast and Orange trees in blossom both of which are very fragrant. I have not seen an Orange grow. I think it must be delightful for a small bunch of the flowers will fill a room with fragrance. We are somewhat isolated here. Superintendent and wife from Nantucket. I have not seen them. We have no way of riding except in a Mule cart and the Mules here have to work every day so I have had but one ride. Mrs. Root and I went to one of the other Plantations. A colored boy drove for us and he was happy enough to have the honor of taking us [for] a ride. I suffer you will see the account of the burning of the Gun Boat in the papers before you get this but do not get alarmed about me. I feel as safe as I did in Vermont. Lay down at night feeling as secure as ever I did - sleep soundly. The Pickets are stationed almost under our windows. They have been white soldiers but on Monday they were relieved by the 1st S.C. Colored regiment. A company of the 4th N.Y. was here when I first came and we formed some very pleasant acquaintances among them. One of the Corporals was a Vermonter by birth [illegible] in the vicinity of [illegible] he had a Montpelier paper which he lent me. I took a good deal of pleasure in looking it over. Mr. Root invited him and another young man here to dinner. They said it was the first time they had sat down to a table with a cloth on and laid in order with dishes since they left home. They were among the first volunteers. They did seem to [be] crying their dinner. This is the third sheet and it seems as though I had not half done. I want to answer Mary's and Lizzie's letters. How are Father and Mother Abbott and the girls also? Love to them all and [illegible] folks too.

I wish you could send me a lump of sugar and I could send you a strawberry. Did Uncle Daniel and young Daniel get into real quarrel? Little Jennie is a year old. It hardly seems possible. It seems as though I had lived six months in the last six weeks. Time goes so fast too. I have not taken off any winter clothing yet although it is rather uncomfortable in the middle of the day. Mornings and evenings are cool and a little fire is very pleasant. There is a dampness in the atmosphere that chills one very easily. It is not good to go in the early morning or in the evening. I shall have to stop and tell the rest another time.

Carrie I will expect to see you here some day if the rebels do not get this Island and I do not think they will. You can teach this summer if you have a chance and be ready to come down in the Autumn. Mary, I presume, has written you of her change of residence before you will get this. I think she will be much happier than not earning anything. I felt bad to leave her but it seemed we could not [be] prosperous or we did not. I am full so I shall have to stop. I will [illegible] to Carrie but it is Knight too answer it for all and hope all will.

I was very glad to hear from Sue. I wish I knew where to direct a letter to Sue. I would write to her. It seems a blunder or in me not to give you my address. Direct to Beaufort S.C. care General Saxton and it will be sent to me where ever I may be.

I am sorry I did not get this ready to go by the driver as she sails today but Mrs. Root has been quite sick for a day or two and I have had the house to attend to as well as school. I shall send this to the Post Office on Monday so it will go the first boat that comes along. Write all of you soon. Your sister Martha

Perryclear Plantation Apr. 25th 1863

Dear Brother and Sister

Sancho Hazel went to town yesterday and brought me your letter and one from Cousin Lib. You may be sure it was very welcome. Was glad to know you were all well. I am still in the same place where your last letter was finished. I did not expect to stay more than a week when I came here but Mrs. Root was not able to teach her school and Mr. French was not able to carry out his arrangements to send Teachers to Jacksonville, as he expected, after it was taken by the 1st S.C. regiment, but the place was abandoned. So of course no place for Teachers at present and he had more in Beaufort than he could find places for there and everything on this Island has been so uncertain, especially the Plantations in sight of the rebels. He made arrangements to send me, and another lady from N.Y. that came here the same time I did, on a Plantation but it was not considered safe just now, so here I am. Mr. and Mrs. Root wish to have me stay with them very much and he is trying to make it permanent and I think he will unless some new way should open. Mrs. Root is now quite well and will take her school again and I shall go to another Plantation, a mile and a half from here, which is under Mr B. care, and have a school. There are quite a number of children in the place and several other places near have no Teacher so I think I can have a nice school. The nearest white family is three miles from here so we have to depend upon our work and ourselves to make time pass pleasantly. I have not had time as yet to feel lonely for I find employment and amusement also among these people until I am tired and then it seems so good to rest, for it is so warm that one gets tired so soon - the sun today, is as hot, as one of the hottest days in Vermont. The mornings and evenings are quite cool and so damp that it is not considered prudent to expose oneself to either very much, for I find if I go in the Garden after sundown I am chilled in a few moments. I shall try to be very careful so as not to get sick and obliged to go north, as much pleasure as it would offer me to see you all. The Teachers in Beaufort do not have but one lesson of three hours in a day and sewing school two days in a week in the afternoon and are required to visit among the families in each ones district as often they can consistently. I have not had school here more than three hours in a day as that is as much as it profitable for the children, until they are more advanced, for they cannot study themselves much, and everything has to be talked into them. Three hours is as much as is good for Teacher or pupils at one time. I am very much interested my work and never think of these black faces when I am with them; they are quick to learn, as full of fun, and mischief as white children. You would smile to see them come into school in the morning. The boys touch their caps, if they have any if not, make the motion. The girls curtsy in the manner peculiar to the race with a "Good morning maam" and when school is closed, in the same manner as they go out. I could

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hardly maintain the school marm dignity the first day I was in school. Some of the men will touch their hats when I meet them as gracefully as any gentleman. The women are more uncouth than the men. I think perhaps it is owing in part to their dress, for they wear cotton bag dresses very narrow skirts not reaching much below their knees. While the men dress like white men. On Sunday they dress more like white women. Mr. Root is a Congregational minister so he has religious services here every Sunday and all the people come. Love to Mrs Strobbridge and any of my friends who may care to inquire. Tell Casse to write if she is with you. I wrote a long letter to the Cabot friends last week and directed it to her. If all things prosper with me I hope to have her here before next winter. I wrote to Sue a few days ago. I feel unhappy about her sometimes and this I think I will not do so for I can not do her any good [illegible]

Direct to Beaufort S.C. care of Gen Saxton and it will come to me direct. I got cousin Lib's the same day as yours. It was written two weeks later.

Perryclear Plantation May 23rd 1863

Dear Cassie

Jack Doctor went to Beaufort yesterday and brought me your letter, one from Lib, and Sue, and a big bundle that Aunt Mary Ann sent me. I wrote to her for a musquito net, calico dress, and a hat. She sent them and another dress as a present, two pairs of Pillow cases, four knives and forks, two tea spoons, two large spoons, Bowl Pitcher and pail. I will send you some pictures of my dresses when I get them made. You may smile at my wearing a hat, but everybody wears them here. It is the best of anything for this climate as it shades the face and is cool for the head. I had my old Neopolitan stiffened and pressed before I left N.Y.. Have worn it twice and now I have a hat. I presume I shall not wear it but four times this summer. I have not been to church since I came here for we know no men to row the boat and is a very hard days work to go to Beaufort and back again. We have Sabbath school for the children and sometimes the men and women come in and we have a "praise" meeting as they call it. With very few exceptions those that are Gospel men and women as they express it, meaning members of a church, are Baptist and they are not allowed by the ministers and elders to go to any other church. So Mr. Root does not like to ask them to row the boat for us to go as they are liable to censure if they stay away or go to another church. It would be very pleasant to me to go to Church again. I enjoy our Sabbath school very much for the children seem to love to come very much and I feel that with the blessing of my Heavenly Father I am sowing the good seed that may eventually bring forth fruit. The bodily rest of the Sabbath has seemed necessary to me thus far, but I hope to get acclimated soon. I am well, but get tired so easily. I am now located. Stay with Mr. & Mrs. Root and have a school of my own two miles from here. Go every morning at half past seven o'clock and return at half past ten, and three days in the week I go again in the afternoon at five o'clock for the benefit of the men and women who cannot come in the morning. I ride a little "Secesh" horse, a little bigger than a big dog, but he takes me to school as fast as I care to ride. I

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am getting to be quite a horsewoman and enjoy the ride much. Except it will not be so pleasant when it is very hot. I have a nice school of thirty children and twenty five men, soldiers of the first Colored S.C. Regt.. They do Picket duty on this Island. The Headquarters are very near my school and the Capt. of the company asked permission for the boys to come to school. I very gladly gave them permission to come. It is uncertain how long I may have them, but I shall endeavor to do them all the good I can. They are, some of them, very fine looking men. Very few can read anything more than the letters, but are improving fast. I have two or three only that can read in the testament. I wish you could look in upon me surrounded by the dark faces, but bright and pleasant. My school room [is] in the Piazza of the old Plantation house. When I have all the children and a good many soldiers, I have to send a part of them out of doors. Mr. Root will make me a school room as soon as he can. I had made a plan for you in my own mind. It is frustrated, but there is a time coming for you here if you wish. I wish you were here now. I am on one end of this Island, and a part of Ladys Island is very near here where they have had no school. They wished very much to have one and said they would come over for a Teacher and bring her back. So I thought I would make a beginning, go there three times in a week. Could manage to keep two schools till you could come, but just as I was ready to commence a Teacher from Conway Mass, a friend of Mr. Root's, came here and now goes over every day. She is, I judge, about your age, a graduate of South Hadley, a very pleasant lady. Her name is Martha Clarey. She is Mattie and I Martha. I do not think it wise for you to come at this season for it takes time to get an appointment and you could not get here before it would be very hot weather. Today it is as hot as any weather in Vermont. Sun is so hot that one can hardly stand it a moment. Not a breath of air stirring and summer has not yet come. I cannot realize [end of page]

I wrote to the cousins not long ago. Am glad they are to have a new barn. They seem to have a good deal of sickness. Love to them all. Kiss the children for me. If Jesse won't have his, give two to Flora or Martha. I hope Ephram and Cassy will get time to write soon. Mary's Washington expedition was a failure. I am not sorry for I think it was too much for her to do with Olie. Love to Grandpa E.C. and give [illegible] Write soon to your sister, Martha.

Direct you next letter to the care of Rev. A. Root and it will be sent to me directly from the office.

[Donor's note: part of letter, 1863-1864]

[Editor's note: Mr. and Mrs. Root are still in residence.]

[start of page] to have so little feeling for one another. I realize more and more every day the awful wickedness of Slavery and wonder they are as good as they are. I have visited them in their homes as much as I could find time or strength. They seemed a little suspicious at first, but now they give me a pleasant greeting and seem pleased to see me and have me talk with them. They all seem to have a strong religious element in their natures. Cut off from all earthly comfort, they have gone to God for consolation. Their

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childlike faith and entire confidence in their Heavenly Father is often a reproof to me for I have so much more given me than these poor degraded children of our common Father. I have not yet heard one man or woman speak unfriendly of their old Massa or Missus. Say they worked them hard and did not give them enough to eat and don't care to see them but never seem [to] cherish a revengeful feeling towards them. I am very tired and will leave this until Monday to finish.

18th: I little thought when I left this two weeks ago almost that I should have been so long in finishing it. My Boil proved a more serious affair than I anticipated. It is as large as a coffee cup and has been very painful indeed - it was more than a week coming to a crisis and when it burst I was so weak from pain and loss of sleep that I have not been able to sit up but a small part of the day. It had discharged more than a pint and still continues but the quantity is slowly diminishing. I have not been to school for two weeks but hope to be able to next week. I am as thin and pale as if I had had a fever. I sleep well and have some appetite so I shall be as strong as usual soon I hope. It is said Boils are healthful so I expect to be very strong after this monster is well. I had not felt well for several weeks. Was not sick but tired all the time. Could not rest at night from fatigue. Mrs. Root and Miss Clary had not been well so I had a good many household care in addition to my school labors, so I was not in as good condition as I might have been to bear this. It has been extremely warm weather ever since June. It came in until today it is quite cool and I feel much stronger this morning. We have had string beans and new potatoes for several weeks. Yesterday we had cucumbers. Blackberries lasted five weeks and I almost lived on them. We have had ripe plums but they are nearly gone. Are shaped like Green Gages and the same color but not larger than the common red Plum. Are very good to eat and nice stewed. All kinds of fruits are more acid than in N.E.. Peaches will be ripe this month. Blueberries and Whortleberries are nearly ripe but are not as plenty as Blueberries. I would love to send you some Magnolia blossoms if I could but they are so large I cannot put them in a letter. Our garden is not as pretty as it was for the flowers are nearly all gone. I will put in some leaves of the Acasia tree and a blossom if I can find one. The leaves are very pretty, I think more beautiful than the blossom. I see quite a variety of wild flowers as I go to school and I intended to get some for you but I shall have to difer it until next time. This is in many respects a beautiful country but I miss very much the rocks and hills of New England. We have a fine water view from our house of which I never tire of admiring. I have seen but one stone not larger than a mans hand since I came here. I have often wished the past two weeks that I had some of my Nephews and Nieces here for a little time to make me forget how bad I felt. I have had every care I needed from all of our family. Mrs. Root has gone to my school every day. I long to be able to go myself for it is too much for her as she is not strong. Hoping to have another letter from you before long. I will close. Love to Mr. Clark, Ephraim, Cassy and the children and accept the same from Martha for yourself. Remember me to your sisters and Mrs. Strobridge. I will put in a bit of my new Calico Dress for you all to see and Flora can have it for her patch work. Kiss her and little Martha for me. I hope Mr. Clark is better than when you last wrote.

[Donor's note: part of a letter, 1863]

[Editor's note: Mr. and Mrs. Root are no longer in residence.]

My school is so far away. If I do my duty by my school and visit among my people I have very little time or strength for household work. It is a mutual benefit to Sup. and Teachers to mess together. We have the benefit of his cook and the house and table is made more pleasant for him than if left entirely to the care of a colored woman.

The Secesh took the house servants with them so it is very difficult to find a woman on the Plantations that knows how to do work in a house properly.

The people have worked very industriously all through the season and saved their money to buy land. Superintendants have been staking out their lots for them all over the Islands - it has been expected that a larger part of the land was to be sold in small lots to the "people" the first of January - it is not certain that it will be done so soon; in all probability it will be sometime sold to the "people." They are so ambitious to own land I hope they will not be disappointed.

The great fear that has prevailed at the north of the colored people all working north if they were free - nothing but Slavery will drive them from their homes. They are so strongly attached to their old homes. They do not like to go to another Plantation to live and almost without exception reply when asked if they would like to go north, I had rather stay in my old home. I am used to this place, and don't know anything about the "North."

This work is so great that I sometimes for a few moments feel discouraged. I can do so very little comparatively. I, for the most part, am hopeful and content with doing all I have strength given me and grateful to my Heavenly Father that I am permitted to work in this field. I am more and more interested in these people and long to do so much for them. Wish I could get at them in their homes - teach them to live like civilized beings. They are improving, seem to wish to have their dress improved and that is one step which I do all I can to encourage. Show them how to [page ends]

I think Pa is in my debt. It may be well to remind him of the fact as he has some more leisure than he has had and can write better than in the summer.

[start of page] was cooked. She usually now will make a good fire to commense with.

Every Superintendant is entitled to a 'cook' paid by [the] Government. Mr. Drew[?] has had one ever since he came here and it is a great relief to us, although she does not know how to cook very well. We can easily do that part and she does things for us. Mr. Root drew his four dollars per month, a cooks wages, and Miss Clary and I did the work as Mrs R. was sick a great deal and not strong anytime and it was as much as she could do to teach her school - she did not get the pay - he had that. It has been much easier to get along since they went away.

Perryclear Jan. 12th 1865

Dear Brother & Sister

Your very welcome letter came to hand a few days ago. It was long coming, but I forgot that when I got the letter - so I will answer soon so you may have no excuse for visiting (as far as I am concerned) so long again. I was very glad to hear that you were all well for I began to think you were sick.

Lib's second letter came the same mail as your although dated a week after - suppose she did not have a chance to send it to the Office.

No letter from Cassie for a month, feel somewhat anxious to hear. Mattie and I are jogging along farming our daily round of duties without much variety - time passes swiftly, our time so fully occupied that we have not much time to be lonely. The day before Christmas we went to town - the Sat. before took dinner with our neighbors Mr. & Mrs. Hitchcock, which served to break the monotony of our lives somewhat. There was an Emancipation celebration in Beaufort on New Years. We did not know of it until it was past so of course were not present - had we known it, should have tried to have gone. Sherman has sent a great many contrabands to Beaufort, so the town is full and the country around covered with tents. The Hospitals are full of sick and wounded. We have not heard the sound of war very much for a few weeks. A Lieut. of the Regt. on duty here called today - said a part of Sherman's army was on this Island - We are so isolated we do not get the news until it is old. M. has the Springfield Republican & I have the Standard - they are old, both of them, when we get them.

Our Sancho got exemption papers so we have him to do for us. We have one trial that we were free from last year that is wood. These people think it superfluous to have wood more than enough for one day. Sancho did not always give a good supply would burn the last stick at night and then must in the morning till he went to the wood brought a stick on his shoulder cut it before we could get our breakfast. So we thought we would get a cord. Engaged a man the last day of Nov. being Thurs. to cut a Cord in the woods. Promised to do it the next Sunday so waited patiently a week heard nothing from the man. So I went to see him. Finally we got small part by the middle of the month - the last day after dark the remainder came, 3/4 of a cord in all - not quite discouraged we engaged another man last week to cut another but he did not do it. Another still this week which promised to do it this week - two days more before it will be done. We have had some very cold days, not many at a time. For the most part it is very fine - changes are so sudden that we feel the cold very much. Jonquils are budded in the garden. Our Cow lives out. Has not been fed any yet. Supposed we should have to buy some blades for her but she gives more milk than she did last fall so we will let her run - she gives perhaps 3 pts. per day - not enough to make butter but saves a good deal.

What did you get for goats, .70 here. Our rations have been cut down a good deal so we do not have as much to sell as last year but enough to cover our Butter, Potatoes & Oil bill. Our meat, we sell nearly all as M. is not any more of a meat eater than I.

I send the little people some little book[s] which will please them I hope. Will send Grant one in his mothers letter. Think Flora's remark about the baby's socks was pretty cunning. Did not know as she was so shrewed. Wish I could have her and Martha here sometimes. Would be rather of a bother when we both are gone to school all day as we often are. Love to all who care enough to inquire. Kiss the little ones for me. With much love to you both, from Martha.

Where do Gene and Electa Kidder live? Is Plysom Bilten going to have a new wife?

Perryclear Point Mar. 28th 1865

My dear Brother & Sister

Your very welcome letter was received in due time and offered me much pleasure. I don't mean to be so very particular as never to write unless I am in debt to my brothers and sisters for I know you all have more work and care than you ought to have and do in my heart excuse you if I do sometimes scold a little in my letters.

You can scarcely realize in your own home how much I enjoy letters from loved ones from whom I am separated or how much I anticipate getting letters - have a regular mail every week now and sometimes transient ones between times. This is a very rainy day. Had school this morning & now Mattie & I are seated by our cozy fire writing - was so rainy she did not cross the river today. Have got my new scholars arranged and my school in working order again - they are progressing finely - 33 children & 10 adults at Perryclear Point and almost as many more at Wm. Perryclear - have been to the latter place three times per week; but after this week shall not go there. The children must come here. Find I cannot walk so far as the weather is getting warm - have had a ride occasionally since Mrs. Kingman has been here but cannot depend on riding. Beside I have enough to do at home with housekeeping thrown in - find my strength somewhat failing for a few weeks but was anxious to continue as long as I could for the sake of my Adult class - now they are at work and would not come very much and the children can come to me. There is plenty of work there for one Teacher but no place to live and no means of getting there from here only to walk - have thought of Lib & wished there was some means of transportation. Should try to have her come if she wished still to, but I see no remedy for the main difficulty. Horses are very scarce and high. Mr. K. has not been able as yet to get enough to do his work on all of the Plantations under his care as he wishes. Will have to cultivate less Cotton and have more done with the hoe than he designed. The people have been preparing the ground for planting for several weeks - have already planted Peas, Squashes, and Irish Potatoes. Will plant corn and Cotton next week. Peach & Plum trees are in blossom, also Strawberries & Blackberries. Jonquils

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and Snowdrops we have had in the garden more than a month. Roses are budded - the Jassamine covers all the shrubs and small trees in the woods. Looks so pretty twined among the branches of the Pine and Scrub Oak. Is very fragrant too. Yesterday I saw purple and white violets and some other flowers, as I went to school, new to me. Think I will put some of the Jassamine in this letter if I can get some before I have a chance to send this to the Office. Six months has flown since I left P. preparatory to my return. July will soon be here before I can accomplish all I wish I fear - have no decided plan for vacation. Think I shall wish to return if the Asso. will give me another appointment. Carrie & I have been thinking of visiting Sam & Lill but have not decided yet to go. Had a good long letter from Sam since my return inviting me to spend my next vacation with him which increased my desire to go very much and Caroline seems to be quite enthusiastic, so we may do so.

Last Sunday Mr K., Miss Clary, and I went to Church (colored) on Ladies Island. Crossed the river and walked two miles. Heard a Colored preacher Kit Green. His text was in Acts - Paul's defense before Agrippa. Said Paul must have been of low origin or he would not have been so mean as to persecute the Christians - "he did not even know his daddy" brethren. He read all of the chapter where Paul heard a voice saying "it is hard to kick against the bricks." Asked if they knew what kicking against the bricks meant - it was kicking against God. It is the only sermon I have heard since I left N.Y. and I enjoyed it very much. The preacher possessed a good deal of native talent. If he had had the benefit of an education would be equal to the average of white preachers.

The Church was built in Sesech times for the Colored people - a frame, boarded on the outside, no windows, a few wooden shutters, and a floor. Rough made movable benches will seat about two hundred - every seat was occupied. We were the only white faces in the house.

My new scholars, a large part of them are quite light colored but few of them have ever been slaves. But are as ignorant and not as good looking as the real negro - were the most forlorn looking set of people I ever saw. Were ragged and dirty. Had been following Sherman's army and fared hard on the journey - the children are bright and eager to learn. It is a pleasure to teach them. I enjoy this work more and more. The little paper comes all right. I inquired about the postage when I was in town a few weeks ago. The Postmaster said he thought it was paid at the other end as he had not been notified - did not have to pay Postage last year. Some of my new pupils can read it now. Others will soon be able. The books I selected from the P.S.S. library am now using to good advantage.

We have had a great deal of rain for a number of weeks - expect you have plenty of snow yet - will be making Sugar by the time this gets to you. Wish I could [be] with you to have a taste.

We eat the last of Sarah Ann's cakes not long ago. They made us several good meals and some of our friends also that happened to visit us at the time. Our cow is dry

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and we shall be without milk unless we buy canned milk which I presume we shall not do often. We shall miss milk very much as we have always had some ever since we came here. One of the firm of Greenes & Co., owner of this Plantation, bought some goats intending to send them out here as soon as a boat came but the man he bought them of went away and took them with him or sold them to some one else. Cows are very scarce in this department. We shall let the Colored woman have her that we promised her too. Mr. K. would keep her but she is old and rather troublesome as she is not used to staying alone, being no other animals now on the place. Things are so uncertain here, and our stay also another year, we thought it best to sell her. The new member of the house is quite an addition to our household. Relieves us of some cares and does not add much to our work. So intelligent, very much of a gentleman, quite a talker. Has a great many funny stories ready for use, not so very dignified. But he can lend a helping hand in the kitchen when we come home tired and hungry as some of his friends come to see him unexpectedly and he would like to give them some dinner. We were a little anxious when we learn[ed] the place was sold. Mr K. has been here two months and we find it much more pleasant than to be alone. He has a family in Illinois - has not said anything about any of them coming here still he may intend to do so as he goes home in July.

I am anxious to hear from the draft - hope Ephraim you will not have to go from home. Seems as though this war must soon close. Don't hear much from Sherman - think he is doing well. You get the news before we do. The Almanac has not come yet - hope it is not lost. Had a letter from Mary last night. She and Olie were well. Nothing from Caroline for two or three weeks. Sam and Lill have not written for a long time. One of our men had just told us that he is going to Beaufort tomorrow so I will send this along without the Jassamine. Kiss all the children for me and write soon.

Yours with much love, Martha

Tell Lib I shall look for her answer to my letter soon. I want to write to Mary and Knight and Sarah tonight to send in the morning so it may go by this mail.

Love to all inquiring friends. Had a letter from [illegible] Hand. She mentioned the death of Mrs. Gould. Think she will be missed in her family and in town also.

Brickyard April 12th 1871

Dear Sister

Your very welcome letter was received a little more than a week ago with much pleasure. Hope all the sore throats are well by this time. We have had summer weather for several weeks - the season is at least two weeks eelieer than last year. Had Strawberries and green Peas last week in Beaufort. Plums are half grown, Blackberries also. Corn two or three inches high. Cotton just coming up. Had a thunder shower yesterday while I was in school. This morning is quite cool & breezy. Have had but little

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rain but frequent showers so everything grows very fast. I should like a taste of your nice Sugar - am glad you are making so much - will have enough this year for your own use will you not?

Miss Clary's sister left here one week ago this morning. We went to Beaufort with her. Visited and called on all our friends in B. and went seven miles on the other side of the Island. Our friends provided us with a horse and buggy. We started early Thursday morning, called at Mr. Conant's, who lives quite a distance from the main street, and then rode seven miles to Dr. Benton's, took dinner. Called on Mrs. Hitchcock, taking her with us to Mr. Carletons to take tea. Mrs. C. is one of our old Teachers who got a husband here, also was a graduate of So. Hadley several years ago. Miss Clary remembered her as a Classmate. Mrs. Holmes another of our Teachers who married in Beaufort a little more than a year ago, met us with her daughter, a little girl 10 years old, at Mr. Carletons. It was a beautiful moonlight night and we did not leave Mr. C. until after 10 o'clock because they did not have their supper until after eight and as there was quite a company and an elaborate supper took a good while to get through. Mr. & Mrs. C. were to go part way with us to visit a beautiful garden by moonlight which we did and as our horses were not very swift, the road rough and sandy, did not get home until after 12. Mr. Holmes had worried some but said as he knew the Carlestons were always behind time he did not feel as anxious as he would if we had been anywhere else - had a nice time but were tired tired. Miss Susie Clary took the Steamer for Charleston at 8 a.m., and M. and I staid [sic] until after dinner and then came home crossed the river at the Ferry four miles from here and rode home in a cart. Miss C. was here two weeks and one day. We enjoyed her visit ever so much - she is not a bit like Mattie but very pleasant. Had vacation last week. M. & her sister rode and walked about the Island a good deal. I went across the river two miles to the Main land in a row boat to visit the Phosphate works which I will tell you about when I see you. It is school time and I must go now will finish when I come home.

I am at home again, eaten my supper. I am very tired but will try to finish this letter if I don't get too sleepy.

You need not worry about the Ku Klux, they are not near us. There are too many northern people about here for them to care to come here. Uncle Kit is still in jail. Will stay out his time probably there, not be sent any further. Heard the others concerned are having a new trial this month, have not heard anything from it. Do not think anyone believes Uncle Kit guilty of any intentional wrong only through ignorance. Luck mourning over the absence of a minister. I never heard the like - they keep the Church open every Sunday, some of the Elders and Deacon's conduct the service. We [break in letter, possible page missing] more than I. There has been five deaths on this Plantation since we came back last Oct. Three while Miss Clary was here. Aunt Bec, a sister of Uncle Kit about 60 yrs old, and a young woman leaving a husband and three children and an aged Father & Mother. She was their only child, had always lived with them. The other was a little girl five or six years of age who had been sick all winter with Dropsy. The two women were sick but a few days. A good many old people in Peacham have gone within the last year. I will direct this to Martha. Write again as soon as you find the

time. Think now I shall stay through the month of June, am not certain. Love to E. and the children and all the kin. As ever you sister, Martha

I had a letter from Mr. Drew, telling me of his intended marriage, also a picture of the lady. I do wish he would wait a little longer. He said he hoped his haste in marriage would not lower him in the estimation of Carrie's friends. I cannot say I was surprised but hoped it would be delayed longer.

Brickyard Oct. 20.th 1871.

Dear Brother & Sister

You will hear by my letter to Father that I arrived here sooner than I expected so I did not find time to write from N.Y. or anywhere else on the way. I will now give you the particulars of my journey as I had not time to do in Father's letter. I had Mrs. Boutelle's company from Barnet to Bellows Falls, stopped two hours at Springfield for the Seamount [sic] train for New Haven, arrived in N.Y. before I was awake in the morning. Miss Clary came on board before I was dressed and I went to Brooklyn to her Aunt's to breakfast, then reported ourselves at Reade St. and did all necessary business. Found the Steamer Georgia was to sail at 3 p.m., walked up to Mrs. Savin's saw Mr. Nichols painting. Found Uncle & Aunt got home the night before. Uncle was at home but Aunt had gone down to the European Steamer to see Mrs. Davis off. Did not stay but a few minutes. Got the books Aunt was so kind as to lend me, all done up ready for me. Then I went with Mattie to call on a friend of hers not far from Mrs. Savin's. Did a little shopping and then back to the rooms of the A.M.A. and it was time to go to the Steamer. Got safely on board with our numerous trunks found a very nice boat and our State room was the best we ever had. Only a few passengers, six ladies, a young man & wife, who live in Beaufort and were on their way home from a visit to Maine. The wife we were well acquainted with so it was very pleasant for us. Was some seasick but not as bad as usual. Could not sit up or walk about much but was very comfortable lying down but could not write or read much. Had a very quick and smooth passage and were in Charleston early Tuesday morning. The Teachers Home was not yet opened and the Steamer did not go to Beaufort until Thursday. Beside it was said to be very sickly in Charleston a good deal of Yellow fever. It would be expensive staying at a Hotel so we took a carriage and went to the Cars which were to start for Savannah about half past eight. Went to Yemasee, 20 miles from Beaufort, and expected to spend the night and take the stage next day for Beaufort or hire a conveyance if we could, but we found that the Cars were running to within seven miles of Beaufort and three from here. The new Port Royal road, which connects with the Charleston & Savannah road, will be complete to Beaufort in a few weeks. Passengers Cars are not yet put on. A son of Mrs. Francis D. Gapen and an acquaintance of ours has charge of the work on the road and he got us a passage in a train of ten platform Cars loaded with timber. We four sat on our trunks and rode thirteen miles very comfortably and pleasantly. Arrived at Gery Hill which consists of a few Cabins scattered about. I started in pursuit of a conveyance for us to Perryclear -

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teams are very scarce among the colored people and I only heard of two in the place and they were both away from home. So I turned back and found Mattie had found a boy and mule & cart that happened along and had our trunks taken to the nearest house which proved to belong to the railroad hands. It was nearly dark and a man (colored) said he would try to find us a horse & cart to take us and leave our baggage until morning. So we sat down on the baggage to wait his return and while we were waiting a white man who was a stranger only been a few weeks in the place commenced harnessing a [illegible] of horses into a buggy - he inquired where we wished to go. Said he was going to Beaufort and would take us where we wished to go, but he was a stranger and if we knew the way he could go with us. It was dark, the road crooked & blind by daylight, so thanked him for his kindness and thought we would trust our colored friend would get us a conveyance for they know all the paths in the dark as well as by daylight. He started off and we felt rather forlorn but tried to have faith that all would end well. He was not gone but a few minutes when he came back and said "I do not like to go away and leave you here for you cannot spend the night here comfortably. I think you had better get in and I will take you wherever you say. I know you can find a lodging place in Beaufort if in no other." So we got in and told him if he would take us a mile on our way we could find a place to stay. So we got to within a few rods of Uncle Sancho Brien's, one of the old Perryclear people, who lives two miles from the Point on some rented land. Uncle Sancho & Aunt Minna have a good sized cabin and no one but themselves occupy it. They were very glad to see us but so overcome with surprise & pleasure as to be hardly able to give us a welcome for a few minutes, did not last long however. I asked Aunt Minna to give us some supper for we had eaten nothing but an apple since our supper on the Steamer the night before. I did not suffer from hunger for the effects of the seasickness still remained but her rice & eggs we relished very much. They gave us their bed with clean sheets and copperplate spread and they slept on the floor on a pile of Cotton. I have never lodged in one of the Cabins before, Mattie has. The next morning as soon as we were dressed started for the place where several of the old Perryclear people live on a part of the old plantation, where there was a woman who owned a horse & cart. Engaged the cart and Sancho Floyd to go for our trunks. Called on five families and Aunt Lena got us some breakfast and then we walked on to Mr. Thomas where we used to live and waited for our baggage. By the time that arrived the tide was so low we had to wait for the next tide. Called on the few people who still stay on the place and spent the remainder of the time with Mr. Thomas and son, as the other people have gone to Minnesota. As soon as we could cross the river we got here it was nearly night but we had a large mattress and we managed to rest some rolled in our waterproofs. The woman upstairs got us some supper, Hominy, Eggs, Griddlecakes & Coffee. The next morning early we went to work. Got a woman to clean some and a man to go to Beaufort for some supplies. So by Sat. night were quite at home. Sunday went to the Methodist church and such a welcome as we received. Do not think we were ever more warmly received by old and young than this year. Opened school on Monday - this is Friday, have had 60 scholars. I feel rather nervous & tired for I have not had any time to rest at all as I have always had a day or two in Charleston & Beaufort to recruit a little before commencing school. The weather is very warm and makes one feel rather languid. It is said to be rather sickly in Beaufort but is very healthy here. There have been a few cases of Yellow fever. One last week, a Methodist minister

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who has been here several years. Came first as Superintendant of the Freedman's Asso. Schools and since has been preaching in several colored Churches until last year was appointed Presiding Elder. Was a very healthy man and a true friend to the colored people and they all feel that they have lost a friend [page ends, may or may not have been additional pages]

I will bring this long letter to an end with love to you all and write soon. How goes the Mite Society? Do they call a meeting to give an account of their proceedings. Tell all the news. Martha

Beaufort S.C. Dec. 5th. 1871

Dear Brother & Sister

We have had a touch of winter weather for a few days. Mattie & I are sitting as colse [sic] to a big fire in our chimney as we can and not very warm at that for I got pretty well chilled in school although I had a good fire in my big stove. But the house is so open that the wind comes in all around. One week ago it was as warm as June and we feel the change very much. It will be eight weeks tomorrow since I came here and not a word from home. Had a half a sheet from Sarah and a good long letter from cousin Lib Mears. I shall think you are all well or you would surely send me a line. I know you are full of work but I believe it would do you good to stop and write me a letter and break the monotony of the daily round. It would do me good any how. Suppose you try and see if it will not be a mutual benefit. I am going on the same round as usual - school is larger than a year ago - have over eighty names for two weeks have not had more than fifty per day as the people have been digging "tater" - yesterday had a room full. Today it had been so cold did not have but forty two.

Last Thursday (Thanksgivingday) I thought of all my friends - thought I would like to look in upon some or all of them if I could. We spent the day at home ate our little "chicken pie" alone and talked about home. It was a windy disagreeable day and we were glad to stay by the fire and rest. The weather has been so warm and salty that we have felt, and looked, more like Spring than Autumn. But the rest of three days last week and a change in the weather have revived us very much. We had planned to go to Beaufort on Friday and return Sat.. The first was a very rainy day so we did not go until Sat. and returned the same day. Rode in a cart five miles crossed the river near Beaufort. The tide was not favorable for going in a boat. As that was our first appearance in town this year our friends were very glad to see us and grumbled some at our short stay. We were in luck as we saw several of our country friends who happened to be in town that day. We are to have a week at Christmas which we are invited to spend among our B. friends. Expect to go the Sat. previous so as to hear Dr. Webster preach (you remember him) he is the Presiding Elder for this District, his headquarters in Charleston. Spend Sunday with Mr. Scovil, our Supt.. Monday with Mrs. Holmes (one of our old Teachers). Tuesday, Dr. Benten will send for us, he lives five miles from B., to spend the day and the

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following one with them & Mr. & Mrs. Hitchcock. Thurs., visit the rest of our friends in turn, and return home on Friday & make calls on our colored friends who live on the way. Which we have not been able to do thus far.

I want very much forty copies of the Child at Home which will cost \$5.00. If you think it proper will you ask the Sunday School to send them to me. Consult Gen. Kine[illegible] and Mr. Dudley too if best. I have been thinking I would write to them at the S. School, but I have felt too weary most of the time to write a decent letter. You can ask for me and if they send them I will try to send a letter of thanks. I want them to begin the new year. My Sunday School I hope to make better this year, than ever before, if with the help of our great Father above.

The sickness in B. has abated - two of our friends died with Yellow fever beside several others. A few had it and recovered. Our friends there advised us to stay away so we did.

It seems very sad about as David - Lob writes that all Physicians say there is no hope. He may live a few months but liable to die any time.

How are you all? so full of work you can't tell. Sarah wrote that Father & Mother were up there a few days before she wrote - they said that the Mite Society business had been settled. I am anxious to know how and what. L. wrote that Mr. McClory showed himself in such a way as to make even his friends ashamed of him. I want to know particulars.

I should think Pa might write me. I have written him twice. Please remind him that he is in my debt. I wish the children would all write to me and I will answer them. Is Mr. Wessen living? How is Hannah and her baby?

It is time I was in bed and I am tired enough to lie down.

Love to Mrs. Strobridge and any one else who may care for it. Miss Clary sends love to you all.

Do write as soon as you get this if you have not and tell all the news.

With much love your sister

Martha Johnson

Peacham, Vermont

Life of Martha Johnson by Sister Clarissa Johnson Clark 1871

Martha Johnson Born 17th Sept.-1822 in the house that was burned a few years ago and familiarly known as the Benjamin Bickford place. Received her education at the common

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school & academy in Peacham. Spent a year at Franklin N.H. academy 1838-1839. Cannot give any particular account of her conversion, but was received into the church during the winter of 1842. She was always noted for her faithfulness & patience in the discharge of duty. Conscientious, generous, always planning & working for others more than herself. Being the oldest of nine children her sisters cannot recall an instance of her striking or abusing them in any way. She suffered much on account of feeble health and was often on this account hindered in her plans of usefulness. Just & truth saying little & doing much. Selfishness hardly seeming to belong to her. Love for children.

From 1841 to 1846 resided in Rev. D. Merrill family. For the next seven or eight years ill health compelled her to remain at home most of the time. In the winter of 1854-1855 she went to New York to act as matron in the female department of the workhouse on Blackwells Island. In the Fall of 1855 her mothers sickness & death called her home again where she remained the next two years. From 1859 to 1861 was employed by some ladies as teacher in an industrial school in New York.

Her first commission as a teacher among the Freedmen is dated Feb. 21st 1863. And the contract allowed her \$10.00 per month from the Association and rations & transportation from the government. She remained from that time till July 1864. During the summer of 1863 she suffered much from the debilitating effects of the climate. So that she felt it to be unsafe to remain through the heat of summer again.

Her next commission is dated Oct - 11th 1864 & the contract is for \$20.00 per month & soldiers rations.

From 1865 to Oct - 1867 these plantation schools were discontinued and Martha remained at the north. Her next commission is dated Oct.-19th 1867 and the contract \$15.00 per month for eight months of the year. Since that time she has remained in their service till called up higher. I speak of the contracts made on account of the strange idea some people have that hers was a great money making business. Was taken sick on Monday 11th Dec. 1871 & died Sabbath morning Dec 24th & was buried the next-day Christmas & buried in the Episcopal church yard cemetary at Beaufort S. Carolina. She was more feeble then usual when at home last summer & some of us felt that it was not best for her to return. When we told her so she said "this is to be my last year." This was prepared as a first draft in answer to questions by Rev. P.B. Fisk who conducted the memorial exercises in her honor at her old home in Peacham Vt. and it may interest you so enclose[d] it.

C.J. Clark

Brickyard Jan 27 1872

My dear friend Mr. Johnson.

I received your letter last Monday night and thank you so much for your kind sympathy. I think the prayers that have been offered in my behalf have been graciously answered for I have not been oppressed with loneliness as I anticipated although I feel my loss every moment. I feel for you most deeply, for I know that the tidings came to you so suddenly the shock must have been very great. I shrank from sending those letters more than anything in my life. But now I want to tell you more of that days experience, that burial day.

Notice was given on Sunday from the two colored churches that the funeral would be held at 11 o'clock on Monday. A good many persons came on Sunday to look upon the lifeless form. About twenty of her scholars came at one time. The Methodist minister came and staid [sic] about an hour with me. He must have missed the other welcome besides mine which he had always been sure to receive, for M. esteemed him very highly and it seemed after he had gone that I must tell her about his comforting visit. That day was bright and warm but the next morning was cloudy though I was too much occupied to give many thoughts to the weather. Everything was done and I had packed my valise for Beaufort by 10 o'clock. Quite a number of the people had then arrived. We had arranged to have the services on the piazza. My school benches had been brought over and our chairs were used. I then, with my bible in my hand, took my seat by the dear object of my care. After giving an opportunity for those who came early to look upon her face, we waited while the hour passed and the people gathered. And I felt that that hour of waiting was nearly as impressive as the next hour of the service. That was shared by the two ministers, Uncle Kit Green & uncle Sam Ferguson - The hymns they selected were "Why do we mourn departing friends" and "Ye servants of the Lord." I know the ministers wanted more time for their remarks but we had told them we wanted to be on our way by twelve o'clock. I think there were more than a hundred who set out with me to go to the ferry but before we had got far it commenced raining and poured down for a little while. There were but two or three umbrellas in the procession beside my own and the people reluctantly began to drop off till I think there were not more than twenty left. And of these there were ten who crossed the ferry with us. We reached the other side a few minutes before the hearse arrived. Mr. & Mrs. Holmes met me and took me in their carriage. Then Mr. Holmes & Mr. Waterhouse walked beside the hearse and I noticed as we passed one house a gentleman lifted his hat. It just touched my heart. I think it was less than half a mile to the churchyard. There we found a little group of true friends & mourners. They received the coffin so tenderly it seemed to me and bore it to the open grave. The sun had just then shone out for the first time. The Episcopal minister, old Dr. Walker, officiated, then white and colored friends shared in the priviledge of filling up the grave. A heavy wreath and cross prepared by Mrs. French were placed on it and we turned away.

The grave is in a corner of the church-yard in which there are several of our dear Northern people - Two have been buried there within a few months whose society we

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greatly loved. The gates of the yard are kept locked during the week but I can get the key any time with little trouble.

I feel very glad for myself as you may suppose to have my dear friend rest here and I think she would be glad to have it so.

I have received your inquiries in regard to the stone and will attend to it as promptly as possible. Of course it is a great satisfaction to one to take charge of all M's effects and can bring the trunk when I come. I regret exceedingly that I am not able to enclose the bill of expense of burial. I asked Mr. Scovel for it the first week and have sent several times but I presume it will be ready when I send again to him and I will pay it at once for M had seventy dollars remaining.

I think I shall set out on her grave the geranium which she brought this year in her trunk and which I think was given her by Mrs. Underwood. It has grown finely and had afforded us both a great deal of pleasure. Some of the leaves were buried with her.

I am very glad to know of the funeral service in Peacham in time so that I can think of you. Would that I could be there.

I send a paper with a notice of M's death written by the editor Mr. Thomas who is our English neighbor at Perryclear.

I should not expect from him anything worthy of her but Mr. Hitchcock told he should write a sketch of her labors for the Republican and I think that would be good, but I have not seen any yet, so I will not keep this back any longer.

I hope, dear sir, you will find a great blessing in your affliction even a new attraction heavenward.

I wish I could visit you instead of writing but as I cannot the writing is a great priviledge and I am so very thankful I have seen you. I hope Mrs. Johnson is as well as usual. With much love to her I remain.

Sincerely Yours, M H Clary

A Copy

Beaufort S.C. Dec 26

Dear Friends

I will tell you what I can of the precious experience of the past two weeks. On Sunday the 18th we went to church at the new church Uncle Kit's which is four or five miles from here. We rode in a cart on a narrow seat & the horse was very slow and it was a very tedious ride. M said in the morning she dreaded it but we had been talking about going ever since we came back. So M walked down to her S. School as usual & then

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when my S.S. was over Peter & I called for her. At night we found ourselves so tired out that we said we will never go in that way again. I believe we read one of Beecher's Sermons that evening which was our custom this year. I think I read it while she was on the lounge. Next morning I felt as well as ever and did not know but she did it was a beautiful morning & I went part way with her to school for the sake of the walk. I am so glad now that I did - when I turned back we said "good bye" and that was her last word to me in health. She came in from school & sat right down by the fire without taking off her sack & I saw she was sick. She said she had had chills & fever all day yet because she did not dismiss school before the usual time. I did not think so much of it. But she afterwards said she dreaded the walk home so much she kept on hoping she would feel a little better. But when she did set out she had to sit down by the roadside ever so many times from weakness & when she got to the steps she had to sit down & rest before she could go in & I knew nothing of it. I was wholly unused to sickness & could only do for her what ever she suggested. But she seemed relieved of her chills & by the next day seemed very much like getting up again. I think she sat up most of the day. Wednesday she had a great deal of pain all over her. We talked about sending for the Dr. She said she would have Aunt Sarah come in & rub her and perhaps that would relieve. It did very much & the next morning she pronounced herself better. She had had a profuse sweat. We had to dry the bedding while she lay on the lounge and it began to seem like a sick room indeed, only she was greatly relieved of her pain. I sent that morning to Mr. Scovil, our Superintendent, to get advise & medicine for her & he sent pills & other medicine. She took a pill that night & anticipated that she would feel sick the next day from the effects of it but Saturday she had a very comfortable day, only pretty weak. She talked encouragingly to those who came in to see her. She had chicken broth for nourishment & oranges. Saturday night she took another pill & said she thought that would be enough. Sunday morning she was so thirsty & on account of her medicine did not dare to drink water & took tea instead of it. She seemed to feel very uncomfortable but we comforted ourselves thinking that when the effects of the medicine passed away she would feel easier. She wanted some cracked [ice] to chew she was so thirsty but there was none to be had so she contented herself with a toasted crust. In the afternoon she could drink anything & seemed to enjoy it. At night she said she had hoped she should have been able to sing a hymn with me but I read her some verses & prayed while she sat in her rocking chair. When she went to bed I changed her garments & made the bed up fresh. It was at this undressing that she needed a great deal of help.

Aunt Sarah had come in every night & morning to rub her & she rubbed her just as she liked & did it to perfection. Monday morning I sent to Beaufort for the things she wished for - cracker beef for soup & Irish potatoes & apples for roasting. I hoped these would strengthen her & that was all she seemed to want but Wednesday morning we sent for a tonic & there came a bottle of bitters - she had been saying all this time that she always recovered slowly from sickness - so I called it improving slowly to those who inquired - Wednesday night she seemed to change a little. She did not call for things so much & seemed to sleep. I gave her all I had to give of care & nourishment through the day Thursday. She tried to rouse herself, said she would not be so sleepy but it was with more difficulty that I got her back to bed that day. Saturday morning I sent an urgent

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request for the Dr. saying she was much weaker & had to be roused to take her nourishment & drinks. She thought some of getting up Friday & I called Sarah to help me but Sarah found that she was too weak & I hung her things away with a sad feeling at my heart. I hoped so for the Dr. to come that day but at night my messenger returned saying the Dr. was to return from Charleston that night & Mr. Scovel sent some beef for tea & brandy to give her. Sarah watched with me that night. I think M did not say anything only to ask for water unless to answer questions. Next morning when we made the bed we put her in the chair after changing her garments & she seemed brighter than for two days. She spoke so naturally & said "I feel more like myself than I have before my hands feel more natural." She sat up 3/4 of an hour. I think I took great courage especially as I expected the Dr. that day. Then I went about my necessary work which was making bread and doing other things & left her with our kind Sarah, only going to her often to give her drink and the medicine. When my work was all done I told M it was Saturday. She asked me if I ate anything myself: she said I did not look as though I did. I was looking for the Dr. every hour that day. I knew she was very sick. But she seemed very comfortable only so weary and very much wasted. I left her to herself again and took my sewing for the sake of relief and partly because it seemed so good to forget my sorrow in doing for someone else, when there was nothing I could do for her. I could not leave her many minutes though without taking her something. One time that evening she said "I should like some good cold water." Her breathing became labored. We could not tell whether she was awake or asleep. We saw how very wasted she was, such a weary look on her face and I could not but hope she was near her rest. After midnight Sarah said to me "Miss Johnson is going to leave us." I felt so too. Yet I felt that we must send again for the Dr., if at least he might tell me what was her complaint. So Sarah called up Peter and he started for Beaufort with the message that she was very low and could scarcely swallow. She seemed about the same for several hours. Then when the morning came the people began to look in softly. I felt that it would not hurt to have them look at her. But I did not let them stay, though if I had let them the room would have been full. About ten minutes before she died it was evident that she was going. It was a little painful to look at her. I could not believe that she was the same. She was so changed in her looks. But soon all was over and oh how I rejoiced for her. Sarah and Maud, who were with me, rendered all the necessary service to the dead. And Uncle Jim came to offer to go to Beaufort to order the coffin. I wrote to Mr. Scovil and he sent me answer that if I wished she could be buried in the Episcopal churchyard and the minister would officiate. I was glad of the arrangements and it was all carried out. At eleven we had the funeral service on our piazza. A large gathering of people standing in front of it. A good many of them accompanied us when we came to the ferry (four miles) and a few came across to Beaufort. The hearse met us at the ferry. And about a dozen of our dear Beaufort friends met us at the ferry on [sic] awaited us at the grave. The sun shone out beautifully just then. The service was impressive. The friends seemed so tender in their services. A wreath and crop were provided by loving hands. And so I laid away my precious dead rejoicing more for her than mourning for myself. And thinking much of the unconscious ones far away who would be so glad to be there. I never buried so loved a one before. But thus far I have been greatly comforted. I feel that the hardest is to come when I return to the house and find myself alone there. It will probably be next

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Monday. Will you not all pray for me and especially that I may be able to deepen the serious impressions that must rest upon our people. So that that the death may be greatly sanctified to us all. I write this to the sisters jointly asking that it may be forwarded from the eastern ones to the western. And I enclose this little leaflet that came from the rooms during the first week of M's sickness. I first read it to her. Afterwards she read it herself. And spoke of it several times. I shall continue to write to you for I have much more to say and it is a great comfort to do so. Yours truly

Mattie H. Clary

615 2nd Avenue
May 27th 1864.

Dear Bro. and sister

I expect you are looking for a letter from me and I guess I will make a beginning. I arrived at Springfield about eight pm. The train was loaded with soldiers of the eighth regiment and consequently did not go very fast. It seemed to me that I could have gone the last fifty miles on foot and got there as quick as the train did. Well I got there at last and went to bed as tired as I wanted to anyway. But [illegible] all the sleep I get I would ask give much for I stopped at the Russell. [illegible] just [illegible] the dept. and the cars were coming and going all night. and then [illegible] three cats kept guard beneath my window and saluted each other frequently with a "Meeow" "Who [illegible] your ...

[illegible section ends]

Well morning came at last and I got up dressed went downstairs and out in the street and walked about to see the city at six I went in [illegible] my [illegible] paid my bill (which was one dollar) and wnt over to the dept to see to my baggage I found my trunk all right but the (illegible) was split open the baggage master however fastened it together so it held till I got here which was about half past 12. Hey met me at the dept. came home and found Lib waiting for us and the boys [illegible] asleep. Grant is not a handsome child but is as good and full of fun as he [illegible] yesterday. he [did not finish transcribing, too difficult to read but there is an interesting section at the end of the letter where she is describing seeing a southern women leaving for Europe]

June 1, 1904

Yesterday was the annual decoration of the graves at Andersonville, also the unveiling of two monuments, Penn. & Mich. The G.&A. R.R. ran an excursion train of ten cars leaving here at 6:30 a.m. and arriving at the prison pen at 10 a.m.. The long train was crowded from end to end. A very pleasant ride of one hundred miles brought us there on time. Leaving the car we marched by fours to the tap of the drum and after a half mile

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walk thro the red clay, found ourselves in far famed Andersonville. Such a crowd! If the dead could rise and see the changes forty years had made. When nothing but barrenness and desolation - denied the barest necessities of life - shot at by brutal officials & maimed, wounded, starved and set on by bloodhounds - oh when I think of all that has been I feel less like burying the hatchet and more like digging it up in defense of the honor of those whose bodies lie moldering in the graves of that once horrible place. Yesterday the sun never shone on a fairer picture. The grounds are enclosed by a strong fence with iron gates. Near the entrance stands a lovely cottage erected by the Womens Relief Corps and occupied by the man who had the care of the grounds. It is full of relics, pictures, descriptions of the past etc. When the war closed there was not a tree or the root of one left inside the pen. Now stately pines, magnolias, firs, and others whose names I do not recall are scattered about the grounds. Beds of flowers Jessamine crape myrtle and roses of every known variety are here there and every where. Soon we came to the cemetary proper where sleep so many of our brave boys in blue. A marble stone with name, co. and regiment when known. The unknown have the stone and are numbered as are the others. Each one has a little flag at its side. After the children has passed that way all were decorated with flowers either boquets or wreaths. Monuments are scattered about one with the words "Death before dishonor" was erected by Mass. The wells the boys dug with any article they could get hold of are surrounded by wire fence. The tunnels are marked and the dead line where that curse of humanity Capt. Wirz kept his sharpshooters with promise of furlough to the one who brot [sic] down a Yank. I went down to famous Providence spring where there is a building of stone with ever flowing water pure & sweet. I was very thirsty and drank a right smart. I am paying for it today too for if I had drank a good dose of physic I should not have had Georgia quick step worse. The Governors of Michigan with his staff and Pennsylvania with his military co. with wives daughters & sons made a fine showing. A quartette from Atlanta furnished vocal and the Fitzgerald band the instrumental music. About 2 p.m. one of our sudden showers came up and we all pulled out for shelter skedaddling across lots any old way to get to "Kever." The colored brother and sister with lots of old mamys were in evidence. They danced a "hoe down" for our benefit. One girl dressed in pink stockings yellow skirt pink & white waist and a red hat, her face black as tar, danced if you can call such ridiculous cut ups dancing. When she got tired she said "I givine the church nex Sunday and I cant dance any more dis time. case I hab hard work to git "gibness for doin dis er way for you alls now."

I carried my lunch and a box of the maple sugar. Oh my how the sugar did go. "Where did you git it" "Can I have a litt bite?" "Why didn't you bring some more?" One old confederate soldier stood by. "Say Missus what is that you alls is eating." I cut off a piece for him and told him to eat it. He slowly removed his "quid" took a good spit then very gingerly took a bite when a queer expression passed over his weather beaten features. When he found his voice again he asked what it was. When told he said "Gee-whiz and that's regular yankee sugar. well I'm just glad to git a taste of it. May I take a little bite home to the old woman? Nancy will be powerful proud to git it. We've got oodles of cane sugar but taint very good beside that you all got. Maple sugar, I'll be dinged if I believed any such good stuff ever was on the fact of the earth before." I would

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like to have seen Nancy when she got her “bite.” But as she had to stay at home and watch the “crop” I did not get the chance. 5:30 found us scrambling into the cars on our way home where we arrived about 9 p.m. tired, dirty, hungry, thirsty and glad to stretch ourselves on our beds after a bath to rid ourselves of the accumulation of Georgia soil.
Susan J. Chandler

This is a copy of letter written by my sister while in Georgia. Sister Susan’s letter after her visit to Andersonville prison site in Georgia

C.J.C.

Peacham May 8. 1854

Dear Sister Martha:

We received your letter tonight and it is as you say a long time since I have written to you. We were proper glad to hear from you and know that your back is better and you are enjoying yourself as well. Clarissa has gone home tonight and I am to be Clerk of the Protective Union the remainder of this week.

I got home from Glover last Wednesday morning. I had a royal good visit only I had to stay a week longer than I intended to when I went so I became rather uneasy - All on account of the bad travelling - I never saw the like before and when I did come we were jolted about in an old go cart that seemed as though it would rack me in pieces. You ask who is at home up there? No one that used to help me have a good time when I was there before. George, Jesse, and Bill have bought farms in Wisconsin and are there. Jess & Bill are in company and George’s farm joins their so they board with him until they get their house built which I understand will be ready to move into next month.

Rachel is still in Lowell but expects to go West and keep house for her brothers sometime this Summer or Fall. Uncle [illegible] and his wife expect to spend the coming winter in Wisconsin and I believe the old lady counts the days to the time of starting - not a day passes but she sheds tears on their account to think they are so far away and she cannot see them. I found Stillmans folks very well and all the rest of my friends - and all appeared glad to see me - I expect to have a good time staying at home this Summer. Everybody that knows it seems to think it means something very wonderful and the report is that I am to be married this Summer or Fall. But where they obtain grounds for their conjectures I am sure I cannot tell, and I know one thing time will show their mistake so I am not going to dispute them. I am no nearer being married now then I was last year and you know how very near that was. I hear from Bill occassionally but I am not engaged to him for I would not go there any way nor would he wish to have me supposing he wanted me ever for a wife, which is not very certain.

I don't believe they will stay there a great many years - though perhaps they may. Don't ask any particular questions when you write will you. If there is anything worth telling I will let you know. I sent to Peach last Spring and she got me a silk dress. It cost about \$14.00. I have not made it yet. Martha Ewell is coming up next week and we are going to make it. It is brown & blue changeable - is nice & very pretty. I will send you a piece when I get it made. You ask if Jane Marsh has got a school - she has in Orin Martins district at one dollar per week. She raves terribly because she has not got the Corner school and I expect she will be mad at me because I lent my influence on Maria's side but I don't care a straw. I guess according to all accounts their bouders [sic] have had great times this Spring.

Ira Blake & Martha Natch are to be married next week. I believe they are going to make a pretty large wedding. Cass is going with David Goodwillie. As for news about here if there is any I don't know what it is for I have been gone so long.

They are getting along with the Measles very well. Sue has got well. Lib was most well. James was pretty sick Saturday & Sunday but is doing well and Caroline is just coming down with them. We have had very cold weather for several days past but today is very pleasant & some warmer than before. What are you going to have new this Summer: how are you going to have your bonnet fixed. I thought I would get a new one but have concluded to make the old one answer for this Summer. We have not heard from Mary since she left Blackstone. I shall look very strongly for a letter to-night. I wish you were coming home when she does.

What do you expect to employ yourself about. Have you anything particular in view? I was down to Aunt Mary's last Sunday night. Grandmother is there yet. She has got an awful cold which makes her almost sick. My sheet is filled. Write to us often. Love to Uncle & Aunt

From your sister

Priscilla

Marysville Vermilian Co, Apr 28th/61

My Dear Father

We received your letter one week ago. I was glad to hear from you once more and still more pleased to hear of your contemplated visit to us this fall. You can come within twenty miles of us by Railroad should you come by way of Toledo & Layfayette. You can stop at Danville which is sixteen miles from here. On the other hand should you come by way of Chicago you must stop at Plaxton the County Seat of [illegible] County which is twenty miles from here.

We were also glad to hear of your health prosperity & happiness. The past year was also a prosperous one with us. I raised last year 100 bushels of wheat 100 Do of Rye & 2000 Do of corn. I raised, fattened, and sold \$175 worth of hogs. I have now on hands 1000 bushels of corn ready for sale. The prospect some time ago was that we would get good prices for all we had to spare. But now we have was I know not what the effect will be. The war excitement runs high here. Three hundred volunteers have offered their services to the government and under the present excitement there would be little difficulty in increasing the number to one thousand. Party lines seem to be extinct and there is a general rush of Democrats & Republicans to maintain the integrity of the general government. We have a very exalted opinion of "old Abe" hereabouts. He is well known all through this section of Country. Even his political enemies speak well of him & personal enemies he never had any. I have sat in the jury box and heard him plead law. It is the universal opinion of all that know him that he cannot be moved by threats from friend or foe. We have three boys of our eight children living. Frank the oldest is now ten years old Leonard eight. and Allen three. The two oldest begin to work some. My wife's health has been poor for the last two years but is somewhat better now. We have had plenty of grass for the last two or three weeks but have had such an abundance of rain that we have not done much plowing yet. Our soil is of a clayey nature and will not bare to be stired when wet. Winter wheat looks fine and promises an abundant crop.

I have a strong desire to see the old hills and old neighbours once more. A desire that I mean to gratify as soon as the boys get big enough to take charge of things while I am gone. Frank has always been a weakly boy. He had something like the ricketts some five years ago and has never fully recovered. His arms from the shoulder to the elbows do not grow with the rest of his body. Nether has he the use of his arms anight. Otherwise he is as strong as other boys his age. He is quick to learn and seems to have a good deal of mechanical ingenuity. Leonard is a good boy to work and likes of all things to feed and ride the horses. Allen is yet to [sic] young to exhibit many traits of character except for mischief. Should you conclude to make us a visit this fall the month of October would be as good a time as you could select as the roads are generally good and the weather fine at that season of the year.

I have got out of the way of writing letters so much so that it is something of a task for me to write but if you will write occasionally I will try and answer. Give my love to all.

Your Son

Samuel

Leonard Johnson