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William and Hattie Lawrence  
Correspondence, 1854-80.

Folder Organization

1. Ben Lawrence to Hattie Lawrence (5 items)  
2. Hattie Lawrence to Ben Lawrence, 1862-63 (34 items)  
3. Hattie Lawrence to Ben Lawrence, 1864 (23 items)  
4. Family and Relatives to Ben Lawrence (14 items)  
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Folder 1: Ben Lawrence to Hattie Lawrence

1863

May 3, Lake Springs, Mo. He was just made a lieutenant and will be home on furlough.

1864

Jan. 22, Bloomington, Ill.

Mar. 6, New Orleans. He sent Hattie a letter and a pair of birds with a man who was discharged. He talks about “bedfellows.” He celebrated the inauguration of the new Louisiana governor and describes the festivities.

Mar. 13, New Orleans. He has been sick, and sent in his resignation; he is now a “free man.” He is going to remain in New Orleans after his discharge to take care of business, because he is in charge of “40,000 or 50,000 dollars” worth of government property.

Mar. 22, Baton Rouge, La. He left on an expedition.

Folder 2: Hattie Lawrence to Ben Lawrence, 1862-63

1862
Dec. 26. She thought Ben was dead. She is afraid the war will be long.


1863

Jan. 3

Jan. 12. Misses her husband, and is “willing to walk half of the way” to see him.


Feb. 15

Feb. 24. Sent Ben a “care package.” She is happy that he will be a lieutenant.

Mar. 9. Nightmares about husband being sick and dying.

Mar. 23. Her mother is remarrying.

Mar. 29. Home news.

Mar. 30

Apr. 18. She wants him home.

Apr. 20

Apr. 22

Apr. 24. She is afraid her husband’s marching orders signify his death.

Apr. 26. She has not given up hope of seeing him.

May 1

May 4. She heard a rumor that her husband was coming home.

June 2. She just learned her husband hurt his foot. She also heard a rumor that if the Union captured Vicksburg her husband
[would get to come home.] She is constantly afraid that her husband will get killed, but she realizes that he was “to [sic] good to be killed by rebels.”

June 13. She is lonely and misses her husband.

June 19. She wishes the Copperheads, who were meeting in Springfield, would “get run off the track and kill[ed].” The 94th Ill. was eight miles outside of Vicksburg.

June 29[?]. She had heard that he will be in Vicksburg July 4th for dinner. She does not think she will leave the house on the fourth. She is sending him money and is worried about his foot.

July 7. The fall of Vicksburg; describes the celebration; she hopes it is not “another Richmond.”

July 11[?]. She wants to go to Vicksburg to take care of the sick and wounded.

July 19. The opening of the Mississippi celebration.

July 26

Oct. 24

Nov. 1. She met a spy(?) for the Union.

Nov. 15. Her husband is now in New Orleans.

Dec. 3

Dec. 8. She wishes he could come home for Christmas.

Dec. 17. She has been extremely “low-spirited,” and wishes she could come and stay with him.

Dec. 25

Folder 3: Hattie Lawrence to Ben Lawrence

1864

Jan. 3. She is sick.
Jan. 5. She is feeling better. She will get enough money to make
the house payment.

Jan. 13. She talks about her husband going after the cotton the
rebels had stored.

Jan. 25. She is glad her husband returned safely, although she
thought he would be harmed. She notes that she has received 18
or 19 letters from Ben, while her sister-in-law has only
received 4.

Jan. 31. She spent the afternoon reading his letters, which she
could do “day and night.”

Feb. 3. She was sick again, but she was sure that if her husband
were there she would “get well right away.” She hopes that when
her husband’s time is up, and the war is still going on, he will
not re-enlist.


Feb. 29. She had a dream he was home.

Mar. 6. Her husband finally made up his mind to resign. She
wants to see him and is afraid he cannot survive in such a warm
climate.

Incomplete dates

Apr. 2. She was afraid her husband would not like her letters.
She tells how she spent her day.

Feb. ? Cousin Peter is leaving for the army, so she gave him a
letter and some cigars to give to Ben. She reports that there is
going to be a draft so the fighting will end. She was sick with
a headache, and misses her parents.

Apr. 4. She went to the country with her parents.

Dec. 25. She had almost given up in despair that her husband
would never write her again. She was afraid he had been killed.
She sometimes imagines him dead on the battlefield.

Mon. morning. She wrote to her husband to ask what kind of dress
she should wear to have her picture taken. She wants to dress to
“suite” him.
Mar. 11. Her husband has not been receiving her letters. If he cannot come home, she will go to him. There were five cases of smallpox in Bloomington.

Fragment. She would give anything to be with him.

Mar. 5. Home news. Her relatives are going to a concert. She took Pete to a masquerade ball.

June 8. Ben just left and she had a good cry over his first letter. She feels better after her cry. When he left she watched him until he was out of sight. She is moving in with Bre--e and Emmanuel.

April 24. She heard his unit is marching.

Mar. 3. She misses him.

Fragment. She hopes they will both be spared to spend many days together. She warns him to stay out of the sun and not get sick.

2 Fragments. Labeled 2 and 3.

Folder 4: Family and Relatives to Ben Lawrence

1860

Feb. 26. From his father, James N. Lawrence, Trenton, N.J. He describes a new railroad.

July 11. From his father. They talk about making a hotel a political headquarters because every house was “locafoco.” They are all for Lincoln. Buchanan said the democrats could not be united, and he would rather see Lincoln president.

Sept. 20. From father. “This state [New Jersey] is good for Lincoln by 5 or 6000. We shall carry the legislature “pretty easy.” He wants an appointment as U. S. marshall.

Dec. 17. From uncle, Richard Potts. He is trying to get “along through the Union-Saving times.” He talks about paying a teacher $30 a month. He suggests Ben might want this position.

1863
Jan. 1. From parents (mainly father), New Egypt, N.J. Someone they knew was in the Battle of Fredericksburg and moved up from captain to first lieutenant. They want to get together after the “infernal war” is over.

Apr. 1. From parents (mainly father). Milton is with the Potomac. He talks about an impending battle for him. He suggests that Ben and Milton should go into hog and corn farming on land in the Wabash Valley.

Sept. 7. From father. He knows someone obtaining a commission in a black regiment. He talks about returning to the west.

1864

Feb. 11. From cousin, Peter J. Rowes, Brownsville, Tex. He wants Ben to send him all the men in his charge who are fit.

Nov. 23. From cousin, Brownsville, Tex. He had a hard journey to Brownsville with his unit. There were not enough provisions. Once they arrived there were rations, but no cooking utensils. He went to trade flour for bread and was arrested for not having a pass. He was court martialed. The troops are disheartened.

Incomplete dates

Apr. 9. From sister, Em, Bordentown, [N.J.]. She does not want to cause any trouble between Ben and his wife.

Fragment, no date. From aunt.


Sept. 23. From aunt. There is a continuous cry for more troops. Aunt Sarah and her family have scarlet fever. Milton is in the 14th Indiana regiment. Almost every day Milton has sight of the enemy and has a “brush with them in some way.” They have killed between 30 and 40, while 5 or 6 have been killed on their side. Tells of a soldier bayoneting a rebel soldier in revenge. He tells Ben not to sign up to fight; there were plenty waiting to go because they had no other way to support themselves.

Sept. From cousin Christina L. Potts. Family news.
Folder 5: Friends to Ben Lawrence

1862

July 16. From G. E. Hutchinson, Cairo, Ill. He wants Ben to send lard because it is hard to get. Ben shipped him lard, ham, and butter. He wants Ben to send as much as possible and it will be sold at a profit. A friend was killed from flagship Hartford. He feels that “we will come out all right in the end without trusting to Providence. I don’t think he has assisted us any yet.”

1863

Jan. 4. From Imon White, Towanda, Ill. His division started up the Mississippi River and landed in Sulphur Springs. 22 were taken to the hospital; he was among them. He got an honorable discharge.

Jan. 18. From Mary Gould. Talks about a picture of Ben. She thinks he looks mad enough to kill someone.

July 12. From Clayton Herr, Bloomington, Ill. The fall of Vicksburg. Describes the celebration. Report Meade and Lee were fighting in Antietam. Meade has one-third to one-half the men of Lee. Lee only has 50,000 left. News of the draft. Feels that everyone is in favor of the draft but the “mean dirty copperheads.”

Aug. 8. From Sarah Michael, Decatur, Ill. Her husband is friends with Ben. She misses her husband but realizes that they are protecting their country. It is an honor to serve in the Union army.

1864

Jan. 8. From Maj. A. L. Briscoe, Bloomington, Ill. He visited Hattie and she is unhappy. She did not even laugh at his jokes.

May 2. From J. Howard Moon, 13th Ill. Vols., Alexandria, La. He is camped in a yard about 2.5 miles south of town. At 9 a.m. the enemy appeared with the intention of attacking McClernand. McClernand wanted to attack, but Banks ordered a retreat. They withdrew and the rebs now occupy the place. Trying to clear the
river so they can get supplies down. There are speculators and cotton in the wharf.

July 27. From Stella. She describes her vacation in Vermont.

Missing date

Mar. 11. From Champaign. He (Brine?) wants to come home but he has not been able to.

Folder 6: Algernon S. Lawrence to wife

1862

Aug. 31. From Camp Benton, Mo. A. S. Lawrence [at this point, A. S. is 2nd Lt., Co. A, 94th Ill.] is stationed with Ben. He has never felt better in his life. Two men are sick. He can not leave without a pass.

Sept. 17. He is travelling to Springfield, but they only made nine miles. They camped without tents. They next day they confiscated cattle and a wagon. He wants her to send him stamps.

Folder 7: Army Documents

1863

Aug. 7. Sick list for the 94th Ill. Vols.


1864

May 25. Pass to Lt. [A. S.] Lawrence to go with the ambulance through lines and return.

Missing date

Fragment. From Capt. M. S. Lawrence(?), Co. G, 11th N.J. Vol. Inf. His regiment has 266 people. He was at Gettysburg. Talks
about losing nearly all his men in Gettysburg and Chancellorsville.

Folder 8: Non-War Correspondence

1854
Apr. 1. Poem called “Parody on Byron’s Waterloo.”


1855
Aug. A poem or acrostic. From “a friend.”


1857

1860

1862
Feb. 14. From Bramon Ingles, Crown Point [Ind.?]. She will arrive one week from Wednesday.

1864
Feb. 16 (per envelope). Printed page, water color. Drawing of a man with a pig. Titled “the Forager.”

1873
Oct. 28. From Samuel Rhodes, Wichita, Kansas. Complains about the postal service.

1878

July 30. From James Lawrence (Ben’s brother), Wellington, Kansas. A legal document about a land sale.

1880

From W. C. Scovel, Grand Crossing [Chicago], Ill. Teases Ben for supporting “Greenbacker Stevenson.” Scovel used to live in Bloomington. He is very poor, with seven people in his family.

Apr. 6. To “husband” from “wife.” Talks about a farm.

Missing date

Aug. 9. To Miss Lawrence from Mrs. J. C. Moore, Leroy, Ill. Informs Mrs. Lawrence that she is not jealous of her. She does, however, accuse her of drinking and travelling with a married man (her husband). She says that she was raised better than to do something like that.

From Ben’s mother, Anna Lawrence. She assures him that she was not displeased with his marriage to Hattie. She advises him not to drink or hang around with “bad women.” Father inserted a strip of paper urging his son to join a masonic lodge.

From Trenton. Letter partially in code.

Fragment of letter, partially in code.

From “Harry” to “Pa.” Child’s letter to his father.

Folder 9: Envelopes

Folder 10: Photograph of W. B. Lawrence