

## Alfred J. Church Collection Letters

Guide to the Alfred J. Church Letter Archival Collection, 18th Regiment of Volunteers,  
Wisconsin Infantry

### DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

#### Repository

Civil War Museum, Resource Center Kenosha, Wisconsin

#### Language of Material

Material in English

#### Abstract

This collection consists of 19 documents detailing Alfred Church's service in the 18th Regiment of Volunteers, Wisconsin Infantry. They are letters to and from his wife, spanning from March 12, 1862 to the day he was discharged on disability on October 31st, 1962.

### ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

#### Use Restrictions

No photocopying, please

#### Preferred Citation

(Identification of Item). The Alfred J. Church Collection, The Civil War Museum,  
Kenosha, Wisconsin

#### Provenance

The Alfred J. Church Collection was copied, as written, from the originals.

## Processing Information

Processed by Emily Roeck (2024)

## Biographical note:

Alfred Church was born in 1834, as he was 28 when these letters were written. His wife, Harriet was 26. They had been married for 7 years at this point, and had two children- Frank (5) and Charles (3). He resided in Jefferson, Wisconsin, a small town in between Milwaukee and Madison. He enlisted on March 12th, 1862 in the 18th Regiment Infantry of Wisconsin. He was later sick and discharged on disability on October 31st, 1862. After the war, he and his wife had two more children- James in 1867 and Mary in 1870.

## COLLECTION OVERVIEW

### Doc.#1 of 19:

This letter is the first to his wife on March 28th, 1862 from the Head Quarters of the Eighteenth Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteers in Camp Trowbridge, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In this, he mentions how he was not feeling well the first two days but is okay now. They leave tomorrow. They are sending pay through Madison to the wives, where he mentions a monthly allowance of \$9- each of the children are an extra \$2.

### Doc.#2 of 19:

This letter is the second to his wife on April 14th, 1862 from Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. He writes that he had lost all his paper and everything he had the morning of

the battle (Battle of Shiloh). He recalls being unhurt but having a narrow escape, having his hat shot off. He has bad back pain and diarrhea “very hard.” He mentions the sorrows of the aftermath of the battle and how there are no field officers left. He says he hopes to leave for “Tennessee is not country for northern men.” He killed two men in this battle and the Colonel is dead.

Doc.#3 of 19:

This letter is the second to his wife on April 15th, 1862 from Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. This is a longer letter detailing the Battle of Shiloh. He has had diarrhea for 7 days and is not well. On the day of the battle, he was up all night on guard duty and did not have any meals, so a friend offered him 2 crackers when the firing began. Mentions a coward in the regiment and allows his wife to tell people. The Wisconsin Governor addressed them and shed tears for all their losses. He mentions the difficulty of paying for stamps (5 cents) and 2 sheets of paper (5 cents).

Doc.#4 of 19:

This letter is the fourth to his wife on April 22nd, 1862 from Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. He says it is impossible to get money. He said it has been very rainy. The Governor drowned in Savannah from stepping from one boat to another and fell in, along with some of their papers. He talks more on money issues and if she can send him some stamps

Doc.#5 of 19:

This letter is the fifth to his wife on May 9th, 1862 from Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee.

Here, he details his feelings from the Battle of Shiloh, on April 6th. He was surprised that he was so calm when it began. He was in the front lines and he retreated when the Captain said to. He was scared of being taken prisoner.

Note: Missing page 4 of the packet.

Doc.#6 of 19:

This letter is the seventh to his wife on July 2nd, 1862 from Keokuk, Iowa. He has not gotten a response from his wife lately and notes how he is lonesome and tired, but doing better physically. An agent took his name, his residency, and his disease. He longs for home and would rather be in the army than there. He is like a "hog to fatten" and gets 1 hour to go outside every evening. There are 900 men sick in 2 hospitals. The water is bad and from Mississippi.

Doc.#7 of 19:

This letter is the eighth to his wife from Keokuk, Iowa. He weighs 100 lbs and is unrecognizable. He is waiting for his pay and gets more if he gets a discharge. It is 4 flights of stairs to meals- it is hard but worth it to not be cooped up. He had a good meal. He says that those who have diarrhea are not cared about because the doctors want to keep them sick so they earn their \$100-125 a month for doctoring them.

Doc.#8 of 19:

This letter is the eleventh to his wife on July 31st 1862 from Keokuk, Iowa. His wife and son are sick. Alfred himself is not as well, but better that morning. He saw a friend from Minneapolis there in the hospital- an old man who looks bad. He suggests his family spend the winter with his mother. He does not have his description roll yet, but will send money when he gets it. He says to rent the house or sell everything if it means they can board with someone. There is smallpox in the hospital- he tried to get vaccinated but it did not work so they are trying it again.

Doc.#9 of 19:

This letter is the thirteenth to his wife on August 13th, 1862 from Keokuk, Iowa. He writes about how the food is bad. To be discharged, he will have to pay \$20 and is in a dilemma because he wants to go home. For dinner he had Baker's bread, boiled beef and little potatoes. He exclaims how that is no food for a sick man. He wants his wife to buy an acre of land so they can garden. He met a lieutenant's wife and had supper with them.

Doc.#10 of 19:

This letter is the fourteenth to his wife on August 20th, 1862 from Keokuk, Iowa. He mentions new, good recruits. There are less people in the hospitals now. He wants to go home to see if it will improve his health. He tells his wife she does not have to worry about him visiting any rum or whiskey shop.

Doc.#11 of 19:

This letter is the fifteenth to his wife on August 26th, 1862 from Keokuk, Iowa. He has dyspepsia and holds a lot of pain in his side and breast. He is lonesome even though he is surrounded by people. Things are cheap in the city- you can get 12 apples for 5 cents. He wants to eat but it will make him more sick. He asks for her to send him \$1 if she can. He got \$47.65 for 3 months pay and will be sending her \$10 in each letter until \$35-40. He warns her of going to the Avery's yet because of the Indian conflict in the north of the state.

Doc.#12 of 19:

This letter is to his wife on October 6th, 1862 from Keokuk, Iowa. His wife is feeling better. He says that as long as he is in the hospital he will not get better. He got his description but it will not come until the first of September. They are worried the Rebels may try to take the town. He calls himself a prisoner of war in the hospital. He would rather stay in and write to her than spend time out with the boys. He wishes their friend gave birth to a boy instead of a girl. He said he has not shaved since he got there and if he gets some money, he will have a photo taken to send to her. He does not think he will go back to his regiment.

Doc.#13 of 19:

This letter is the 21st to his wife on September 13th, 1862 from Keokuk, Iowa. He had all his money stolen from him- it was in his pants under his pillow. He has no money and cannot buy any food. He had an examination and the doctor gave him some medicine but he does not know what it will do.

Doc.#14 of 19:

This letter is to his wife on October 29th, 1862 from Keokuk, Iowa. He is well and they decided that he will go home once he gets his discharge, but he does not know how long it will be. He says to get whatever they need and he will pay when he is home. He had lost \$22 out of \$47. He mentions again how for the winter they should go to Avery's or Mother Maydole's until he can be home to fix the house so they do not freeze. It is always uncertain whether he can go home or not. This included a newspaper clipping "I'll Tell Pa When He Comes Home," which is a funny little article about a man who was shaved clean.

Doc.#15 of 19:

This letter is the seventeenth to his wife on September 4th, 1862. He was down the river to see the 19th regiment start off. He did not stay long because families were weeping, seeing them go. They got a new doctor in charge, so he hopes all will turn for the better. Men who are well will go to their regiments and if not, to their families. If he were able, he would go to the regiment until the end of the war. He still holds hope.

Doc.#16 of 19:

This letter is the eighteenth to his wife on September 11th, 1862. He talks about how he will never love another woman, and that if he dies then she can do what she pleases but will not want his children to have a step-father. Some wives visit the hospital, but they cannot because they are poor and must save the money for the children. He continues to

profess his love to her. He talks of the Rebels gaining back the land they had lost, especially in Tennessee where they fought so hard and lost so many. He mentions how when slavery is abolished all the slaves will be sent out of the country. In a "P.S." he asks about a friend in Minnesota and the Indians. He hopes the 3rd Minnesota regiment will kill all of them.

Doc.#17 of 19:

This is what the encyclopedia has to say about the Civil War.

Doc.#18 of 19:

This letter is from Harriet E. Church to her husband Alfred J. on July 15th, 1862 from Jefferson, Wisconsin. Someone misread his name in those who died in the hospital and did not realize the mistake for 5 hours. She describes the pain of a widow. She saw a company of 100 start in Madison- it was sad and she does not want to see it again. She has been working by ironing and chamber work at a tavern and earned that \$1 she sent him. She wants to see him but cannot spare the money. She thinks they should get another lot and put a cellar in under their home, which would cost \$20. She has peas in the garden. She wants a photo of him.

Doc.#19 of 19:

This letter is from his brother, Cal Church in Minneapolis detailing blackberrying and of raspberry and cranberry wine.



**A note on the 18th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment:**

They were organized in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and were in service of the United States on March 15th, 1862. They left on March 30th to go to Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee on April 5th, 1862. They were at the front of the Battle of Shiloh, where a large portion were captured, and then the 2nd Battle of Corinth. They were a part of the Vicksburg, Atlanta, and Carolinas Campaigns, as well as Sherman's March to the Sea. Colonel James S. Alban, previously a Wisconsin state senator, was killed at the Battle of Shiloh, having Colonel Gabriel Bouk take his place.