



# Hon. Alfred Ely Granted Postal Favors to Victim of Narrow Battlefield Escape



**T**he tale is well-known, essentially legendary. Numerous civilians, fortified with picnic baskets, followed the Union Army from Washington, D.C., in July 1861 to what most thought would be a conclusive battle resulting in the defeat of Southern troops at Manassas to easily end the secessionist rebellion. The picnic baskets were not frivolous, however, as Centreville was a seven-hour carriage ride one way from Washington. But the sightseers, who came in fashionable carriages, on horseback, and even on foot, were in for a demoralizing surprise.

Most safely watched from Centreville Heights, about five miles away from the fighting. The ridge on which Centreville is situated held a strategic and commanding view of the panorama to the west. Approaches from the east were also visible from the ridge. Instead of a valiant victory, outnumbered Union troops retreat-

ed in panic. The result was a decisive victory for the Confederate Army and a stinging defeat for the Union. The Northern public was shocked.

While most of the curiosity-seekers fled without harm, not all escaped. Fortunately, only one civilian was killed in the battle, an elderly widow and invalid, Judith Carter Henry (1776-1861), whose home was besieged by fighting.

The bed-ridden Mrs. Henry was either unable or refused to vacate when Confederate soldiers occupied her home. She was mortally wounded when a Union projectile thundered through the bedroom wall and tore off one of her feet, as well as other injuries. She died later that day.

Figure 1 shows the ruins of Mrs. Henry's house, Spring Hill, taken a day or so after combat. The pitiful remains are shown in Figure 2, as taken by George N. Barnard a year after the battle.



Patricia A. Kaufmann

# A Rather Memorable Picnic



Figure 1. Above: The ruins of Spring Hill, Judith Henry's house, taken shortly after the First Battle of Bull Run at Manassas in 1861. Figure 2 Same ruins in 1862, a year later.



Several senators were among the notables in the civilian crowd, including New York Congressman Alfred Ely, shown in Figure 3. Ely strayed too close to Bull Run and was taken prisoner by the 8th South Carolina Infantry. He spent the next five months incarcerated as a prisoner of war in a Richmond prison.

Although the war officially began with the shelling of Fort Sumter April 12, 1861, the fighting did not commence in earnest until the Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861, when President Lincoln pushed Gen. Irvin McDowell to attempt the capture of Richmond. A photo of a uniformed McDowell is shown in Figure 4. But McDowell's troops were stopped at Manassas by Brig. Gen. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard's forces. A full-length portrait of Gen. Beauregard in uniform is shown in Figure 5.

Bull Run was the Union name for the battle, named after the nearby river. It is the Battle of

Manassas to Southerners, who named battles for nearby towns.

Frank Leslie's published version of civilian spectators is shown in Figure 6. It was the first signal that a long war lay ahead for both sides. The civilians who flocked to watch the battle were derided at the time and have mostly continued to be ever since. The observers were joined by William Howard Russell, an Irish reporter considered one of the first modern war correspondents, and photo-journalist Mathew B. Brady, renowned Civil War photographer. In a July 2017 article in *Smithsonian Magazine*, Kat Eschner wrote:

*For these picnickers, the battle wasn't just a spectator sport. It was important politically—so politicians attended; it was important socially—so journalists attended; and it was an opportunity to sell food—so food-sellers attended.*

Clearly, the onlookers could not rely on the hospitality of the local Virginians whose brothers, husbands, and sons were under direct attack by Union troops. So, indeed, a picnic it was. Most of the spectators were men, although there were exceptions. Although the voyeur notion seems outrageous, it was mostly rooted in transitory naiveté.

### Alfred Ely Free Franks on Prisoner-of-War Mail

Hon. Alfred Ely (1815-1892) was born in Lyme, Connecticut. He moved to Rochester, New York, in 1835. Ely studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1841, commencing practice in Rochester. He was elected as a Republican to the 36th and 37th Congresses serving the New York 29th Congressional District, 1859-1863. He was Chairman of the Committee on Invalid Pensions (37th Congress).

Congressman Ely was swept up in the retreating stampede at Bull Run. He was a "guest" at Ligon's Tobacco Warehouse for just over five months.

Often misspelled Ligon's, Ligon's also was known as Rocketts's or Prison No. 1. The Confederacy leased John L. Ligon's warehouse for use as a military prison in June 1861. Some sources incorrectly say it was confiscated, but records in the National Archives clearly record payments for rent, supplies and renovations done to the warehouse. It was soon at capacity.

The Ligon's Prison era came to an end when prisoners were transferred to the newly opened Libby Prison in March 1862. Libby Prison also served as a processing center for all Union prisoners. Coincidentally, building owner Luther Libby was a Maine native. It's no wonder that some considered him a Union sympathizer.

The Ligon's Prison building later became General Hospital #23. Prescription books and morning reports of patients and attendants are in the National Archives.

### From the *Richmond Whig*, 7/26/1861:

*THE "PRISON DEPOT," at the corner of Main and 25th streets, is quite a focal point of attraction at this time. It is filled with Yankees and Hessians, captured at the Battle of Manassas. Like bears in a cage, many of them look through the grated windows of their*

Additional image. A contemporary hand-drawn map of the forces who fought in the first Battle of Bull Run in 1861.

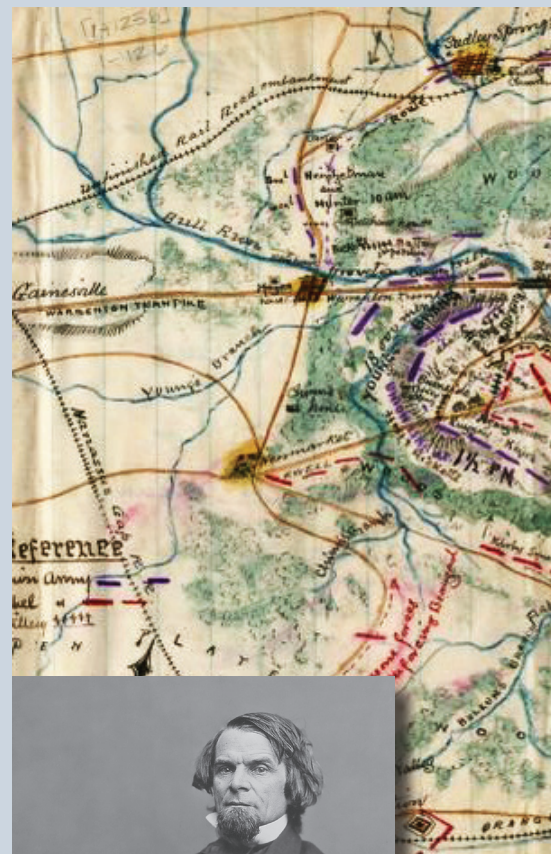


Figure 3. New York Congressman Alfred Ely

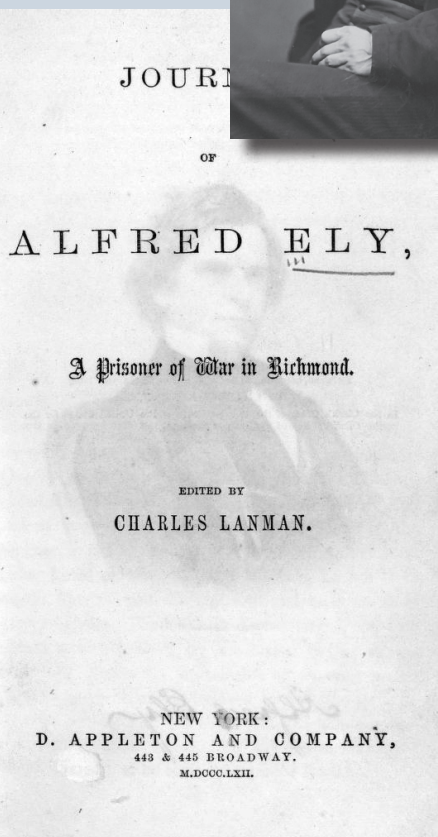
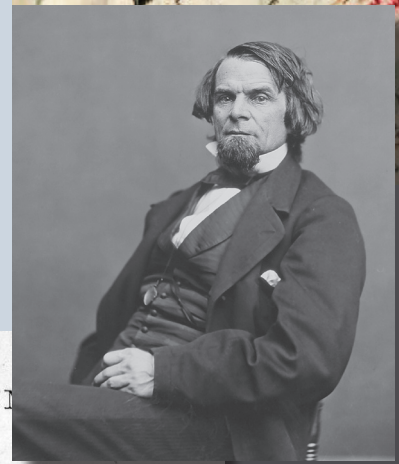
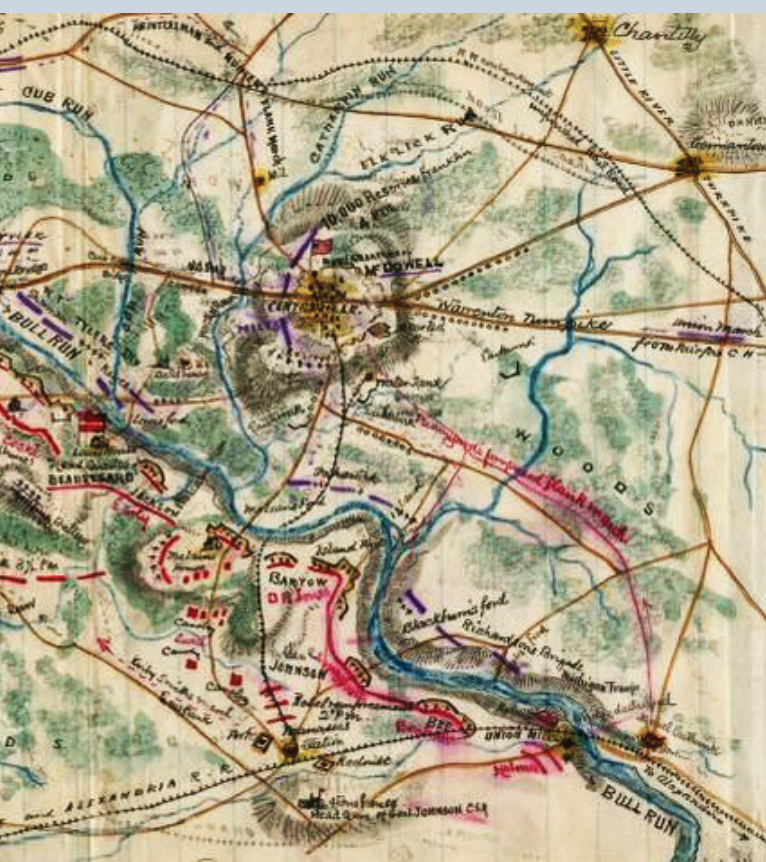


Figure 7. Title page of Ely's published prison journal.





*prison, and thus become visible to the curious people, who stroll to that portion of the city to obtain a view of the Northern lunatics.*

During his time in prison, Ely kept a detailed journal that he later published at the urging of friend and colleagues. The title page is shown in Figure 7. In the journal are numerous references to prisoner mail. Here is an example of Congressman Ely's narration:

*At one time some three hundred letters, addressed to the prisoners, had accumulated at the post-office, and were withheld from their owners nearly a fortnight. As soon as the Union officers ascertained this fact, they instituted an inquiry in regard to it, and were informed that the authorities declined to deliver them until the postage was paid; and as they believed that but few of the privates had any pecuniary means, they had determined to keep them. Upon this explanation, the Union officers directed that the letters should be immediately delivered, as they would pay the postage, which amounted to twenty-five dollars. The Richmond authorities invariably exacted seven cents per letter on delivery at the prison, notwithstanding that the five cents Confederate postage was prepaid by the writers in an enclosure to General Wool.*

Ely's capture was early enough in the war that flag-of-truce mail arrangements were imprecise. Early on, his journal mentions using express mail routes, but these were prohibited for all correspondence by President Lincoln, effective August 26, 1861. Ely also mentions using a merchant to take mail to Washington, essentially smuggling the mail out.

Ely's unique ability to use his free frank on outgoing letters became much sought after by other prisoners. The free franks would have been placed on the inner envelope to eliminate the need to pay U.S. postage. Confederate postage was required on the outer envelope to take the letter to the flag-of-truce exchange point, at which time the outer envelope was supposed to be discarded, although it wasn't always, especially later in the war. The inner envelope conveyed the letter through Union territory. There are some covers known that were posted after he left prison, which leads to the conclusion that Ely generously left a supply of blank franked envelopes when he left prison.



Figure 4.  
Union General  
Irvin McDowell



Figure 5.  
Confederate  
General Pierre  
Gustave  
Toutant  
Beauregard

The two-envelope system was only relevant if mail went through the postal system, but many letters were carried out by exchanged prisoners. Upon his release, Ely claimed to have carried roughly 2,000 letters from “citizens of Richmond” in his trunk, either from prisoners of war or civilian South to North letters.

If an individual may send mail through the regular mail stream without paying postage, he or she enjoys the “free frank” privilege, a benefit first enjoyed in England during the eighteenth century by members of Parliament, the Council, and persons acting in a public capacity. The sender need only add his signature to the envelope. In the United States, the first Continental Congress (1774) extended the same privilege. There have been necessary tweaks over the years to avoid abuse. Technically, what Ely did for his fellow prisoners was illegal, but I doubt anyone complained.

The Government effected Ely’s release in exchange for Charles J. Faulkner, formerly American Minister to France, who had been imprisoned for disloyalty. Ely was set free on Christmas Day 1861 at 5 a.m. – a fine Christmas present, to be sure.

#### Lieut. Charles H. Burd – Shot in the Head and Lived

Shown in Figure 8 is a 2-page letter signed Alfred Ely and dated at Rochester on January 8, 1862, not long after his release. It is addressed to James W. Brown, Esq. in response to an inquiry about Lieut. Chas. H. Burd (1835-1893) of the 4th Maine Volunteers. It reads as follows:

*Rochester January 8th 18  
James W. Brown, Esq.*

*Dear Sir,*

*Your favor of the 2nd inst. making enquiry in regard to Lieut. Charles H Burd 4th Maine Vols has just come to hand, and in reply beg to say that I am well acquainted with him, he having been my associate prisoner at Richmond for many months past. He was, as you are no doubt aware, wounded in the forehead, and was quite dangerously ill from that wound for a long time, and so much so that at one time I began to doubt of his recovery, but I am happy to inform you that before I left he had nearly recovered, and was as cheerful and as happy as any of his associates. He has*

Figure 6. Frank Leslie's version of civilian spectators mulling the battle. It was the first signal that a long war lay ahead for both sides.

Frank Leslie, the artist of this drawing, is shown to the left of center at the bottom.



*borne his affliction like a hero, and deserves promotion in the Army if he should propose to continue in the Service after his release. Money & clothing can be sent to him in care of Major General Wool at Fortress Monroe, who will forward it to Richmond. My own opinion is that he will be released before you can have time to reach him with any assistance. My interview with the President on reaching Washington leads me to express this opinion, which applies to all our prisoners in the South.*

*Yours truly,*

*Alfred Ely*

U.S. Maj. Gen. John E. Wool wrote to Confederate Maj. Gen. R. Huger on January 25, 1862, proposing “the exchange of Burd with someone of like grade now in possession of the Federal Government.” Alfred Ely, as well as others up through



the highest offices of the land, interceded on his behalf to arrange for this exchange. Burd was finally exchanged about nine months after his capture.

Lt. Burd's 4-page letter, shown in Figures 9 and 10, is headed Richmond August 29, 1861, to James Brown; it is long and rich in content. It says, in part:

*I feared that someone would report me dead or mortally wounded but hope the letters I wrote while in the hospital would reach you... My friend Lt. Clark, who is not dead, but here a prisoner safe and well, found me and had me taken in here where all the uninjured officers are confined. Also, the Honorable Mr. Ely and several other civilians.... I was wounded in the forehead at the last of the battle. The Col. gave the order to retreat. I had given, or was giving, the order to our*

*company when I was struck by a pistol ball. It laid me out, but I did not lose my senses. I think I got up myself, and in a moment two of our men had me. I felt of my head and finding the skull broken and supposed that I was mortally wounded. I told our men to leave me and look after themselves, but they would not. I passed the Col. and Major while on my way to the hospital and spoke with them both. My strength held up so well that I got one of our men to examine the wound again as I hoped the ball must have glanced off and he said that it had he thought by the looks. When I got to the hospital or even laid down in the yard of a blacksmith shop, I saw our surgeon, Dr. Banks. I called him and at the same moment almost felt the ball under my scalp. He cut it out, did my head up, and left just in season to escape capture. I have the ball in my*

Figure 8

Rochester, Jan<sup>y</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> 1862.

James W. Brown, Esq.  
D<sup>r</sup>. Sir,

Your favor of the 2<sup>d</sup> inst: making enquiring in regard to Lieut: Chas: H. Burd 4<sup>th</sup> Maine Vol<sup>s</sup> has just come to hand, and in reply beg<sup>t</sup> to say that I am well acquainted with him, he having been my associate prisoner at Richmond for many months past. He was, as you are no doubt aware, wounded in the forehead, and was quite dangerously ill from that wound for a long time, and so much so that at one time I began to doubt of his recovery. but I am happy to inform you that before I left he had nearly recovered, and was as cheerful & as happy as any of his associates. He has borne his affliction like a hero, and deserves promotion in the Army if he should propose to continue in the service after his release. Money & clothing can be sent to him in care of

Major Genl. Wood, at Fortress Monroe, who will forward it to Richmond. My own opinion is that he will be released before you can have time to reach him with any assistance. My interview with the President on reaching Washington leads me to express this opinion, which applies to all our prisoners in the South.

Yours truly  
Alfred Cuy.

Richmond Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 1861

Dear James:

I received your letter with ten dollars enclosed and I assure you to come very acceptable. I was very low with a fever, and my wounds very troublesome, I was also destitute of money, and very low spirited, I should have gone under but for skilful treatment, and tender nursing, and the little dainties the money enabled me to buy. Your letter came through here in four days. Please send me 25 dollars to buy underclothes &c, and charge to my account, if I never return my pay will make it good to you. I recovered from my fever to have a severe attack of ~~faucitis~~ faucitis from which I am now recovering. I am now in the Hospital, but hope to leave here this week. I have enough of the money you sent me to keep me in funds for some time, but I need clothing to keep me warm, and prevent my taking cold so easily. I would like to be with you Thanksgiving. How is little Suzy? I would give a great deal to

see her. She is likely to be quite a girl before I return. I trust Father and Ed are well, and that Frank is also well.

I have written my circumstances very frankly to you, but you must not worry about me any of you, I do not fear death, and am in good spirits. I have not been frightened yet and hope not to be. I have made up my mind to live (God willing) and I shall try to.

You must write to me if you receive my letters. I have rec<sup>d</sup> two from you and hope you get mine.

Give my best love to Mrs B, & kiss Suzy for me. My regards to the Judge, Lewis Diland, and all friends.

I will now say good bye

Your Bro  
Chas: H. Burd,

Figure 15.

1861  
Richmond Va Aug 29<sup>th</sup>

Dear Samuel;

You cannot conceive my pleasure to receive a letter from you right before last. I then knew that you were aware of my safety at home. I feared that some one would report me dead or mortally wounded, but hoped the letters I wrote while in the hospital would reach you, but it was so uncer-  
tain that I felt very uneasy, I was in the hospital here some time, but my friends were Clark, who is not dead, but here a prisoner safe and well, found me and had me taken in here where all the uninjured officers were confined. Also the Hon Mr Cly & several other civilians, I wrote by Dr. Norval, who was also confined here. I cannot understand why you did not receive it, but hope that you are this you have received it and also reason one that I wrote to father some days subsequent in my private journal. The two men who C, and sent by a Sergeant who was going North. I was wounded in the foreheads at the last of the battle, the Col. gave the order to retreat. I had given, or was giving the order to our Company when I was struck or some of our officers would learn the fact by a pistol ball it laid me out but I did not lose my senses I think I got up

myself, and in a moment two of our men shot me. I felt of my head, and finding the skull broken, I supposed that I was mortally wounded, and told our men to leave me and look after themselves, but they wavered not. I passed the Col, and Major while on my way to the hospital. And spoke with them both. My strength held up so well that I got one of our men to examine the wound again, as I hoped the ball must have glanced off, and he said that it had he thought by the looks. When I got to the hospital or was laid down to the guard of a Blacksmith Shop, I saw our Surgeon Dr. Banks, I knew to him and at the same moment almost felt the ball under my scalp, he cut it out, did my head up, and left just in time to escape capture. I have the vessel that was one of the field Chick, and almost took one off the field Chick, and almost escaped. I have every reason to think I have been very kind to me. I hoped that May Nelsonson would learn the fact, but I am sure of my case up to the time Dr Banks left me and write home to father, I have written this is the fifth time to you and father since I have been a prisoner twice before and twice since I came here, My wound is doing

Figure 9.

Figure 10.

very well indeed, but heals slowly, but as I suffer no pain, have an excellent Appetite enough to eat, ~~and~~ I do pretty well but I am entirely destitute of money and many necessaries of life, a shirt & various other necessaries but I have sent my watch out to be sold and hope to raise money enough to get a shirt and several other articles I need, I hardly know what to write you about sending me money Adams Express there can perhaps give you the necessary information, or perhaps some arrangement will be made by the time you receive this that you can send me some with comparative little risk. Here they say the fact is our Govt, that will not allow our letters to pass, but the reports and rumors we hear are not reliable, but very contradictory, if you can send me twenty five dollars, or even ten with a fair prospect of its reaching me, I will do, for I need it enough to run some risk of it to get it. If you send letters with or without money direct to me, <sup>as</sup> Prisoner of War, Care of Gen. Windeus. Gen Windeus is a man of the strictest integrity, and if our letters once reach him, no fear but that we shall receive them. If you send money, send gold, but perhaps you may know some firm in Boston, that has had friendly dealings with parties here who will advance me a small amount

Such a case has already been done here by some Boston firm for Mr C, I believe it the best way if it can be done, and I guess you can fix it. I mean by this for some firm there to write to a firm here to advance me some money, or to send me an order on some party here although not very clearly expressed, I am rejoiced to hear that you are all so well, and that Susy is growing so nicely. Kiss her for me, I should like to see her I can tell you! How's the Prince? Any prospect of him yet? I hope father is well, I regret that I could not be with our Regt when my day was, I should have sent Frank some money, I shall write father some time this week, and if our communication is not interrupted shall try to get letters along quite often, I am sorry to hear Cornelia has been so sick, but trust she will improve. Tell Frank to give her and them all my kind love, and I trust to see them all again some time, Give my love to Mrs B, and I suppose your place is all you desire this summer, Tell the Judge, I wish he had turned a penny on my turning up, I would have gone him rather on my return! my regards to the Judge, Lewis, Deborah & Sumner. I suppose you will send this to father, I regret I could not forward money to Ed, owed him by some of our Co, but I will make it right when I get out of Limbo, I send much love to your father, Frank & Ed, and don't you fret about me, I am doing very well indeed, and in good health.





Figure 11. Envelope from Lt. Charles Burd to James W. Brown, carried north to New York courtesy of released prisoner-of-war Dr. James Norval with a FREE August 24, 1861, handstamp and free franked by John Cochran, Member of Congress

Figure 12. The last sentence of a long war report from the July 23, 1861, *Boston Herald* states "Lieut. Bird (sic – Burd) and Lieut. Clark, 4th Maine, are reported killed."

This report is as accurate as the Colonels could furnish yesterday morning, but many of the missing men have since appeared. Probably not one hundred men were killed in any regiment. Lieut. Bird and Lieut. Clark, 4th Maine, are reported killed. C. H. H.

*portmanteau... My wound is doing very well indeed, but heals slowly. But as I suffer no pain, have an excellent appetite enough to eat etc. I do pretty well but I am entirely destitute of money and many necessaries of life... but I have sent my watch out to be sold and hope to raise money enough to get a shirt and several other articles I need...*

Burd continues, explaining that he is unsure what to do about James sending him money by Adams Express. He heard that sending correspondence by express is no longer allowed but clearly doesn't believe it. He continues by stating reports and rumors are not reliable and very contradictory. Unfortunately for the prisoners, the information was correct, as the prohibition was issued by President Lincoln. Burd mentions trying to send money by a Boston firm for Mr. Ely and that he believes it the best way if it can be done.

The Burd letter of August 29, 1861, came to me in the cover shown in Figure 11 but it is clearly postmarked the week before, passing through New York on August 24 with a FREE handstamp. It is free franked not by Mr. Ely, but

by the Hon. John Cochran, M.C. (1813-1898). Member of Congress is abbreviated M.C.

Cochrane was a lawyer, Union Army general, and politician. He was the grandson of John Cochran, Surgeon General of the Continental Army. At the outbreak of the Civil War, John Cochran became a colonel of the 65<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer Infantry, and in July 1862 was promoted to brigadier general, although he resigned in 1863, theoretically due to failing health, but more likely for political reasons.

The Cochrane-signed cover was to "Jas. W. Brown, Esq., 186 Washington St., Firm Lewis, Brown & Thompson, Boston Mass." with an acknowledgement "By Favor Dr. Norval, 79<sup>th</sup> NY"

Dr. James Norval is listed as the surgeon for the 79<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry, also known as the 79<sup>th</sup> New York Highlanders or Highland Guard. Per guidelines set by the New York Militia, the Highland Guard was to uniform their soldiers in tartan trousers, not kilts, but when on parade, the 79<sup>th</sup> wore the kilt, going against the wishes of the New York Militia.

The Highlanders suffered some of the highest Union casualties at First Bull Run. Led by Col. James Cameron, they charged three times over



Figure 14. Washington, D.C., November 17, 1861, postmarked envelope from Lt. Burd to his father in Belfast, Maine. The postage is free of charge due to the congressional free frank of Alfred Ely.



Figure 13. Lt. Julius Stimpson Clark of the 4th Maine was captured with his friend Lt. Burd on July 21, 1861. (Courtesy Library of Congress)



Figure 16. An Alfred Ely free-franked cover posted with a blurry December 1861 postmark from Washington, D.C., to James W. Brown in Boston with the likely intended recipient "Mr. E. D. Burd, Belfast" noted in pencil at the bottom left (Charles' brother, Ed)

the dead and wounded of the 2nd Wisconsin. In the smoke of battle, they mistook a Confederate flag for one of their own and ceased firing – a costly mistake. Retreating back down the hill, they saw Col. Cameron lying dead in the yard of the Henry House, killed by the Confederates' second volley. Twenty-two percent of their strength were wounded, killed, or captured. A total of 115 were captured and Dr. Norval was taken prisoner at the field hospital set up in the stone house along with Assistant Surgeon Andrew McLetchie. Lt. Burd may have been among those being treated in the stone house as well.

In Alfred Ely's journal entry of August 19th, he mentions that Surgeon Norval of the 79th New York Regiment took a letter from him to President Lincoln. This is within a week of the letter sent from Lt. Burd to James Brown. Undoubtedly, Dr. Norval was released and took mail out with him, to be dropped in the first

convenient U.S. post office, thus bypassing the Confederate postal service.

Also included with this letter was a long pinned-together strip of newspaper column from the *Boston Herald* dated July 23, 1861, giving very detailed battle information. The very last sentence, shown in Figure 12, states "**Lieut. Bird (sic – Burd) and Lieut. Clark, 4<sup>th</sup> Maine, are reported killed.**" Fortunately, the report of their deaths was greatly exaggerated – to cite the popular misquote of Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain). The two made it off the battlefield together, as indicated in the Burd's afore-quoted letter of August 29, 1861. There was doubtless a lot of grieving in their respective households before the welcome truth was known.

Lt. Julius Stimpson Clark was also captured July 21, 1861, and confined to Ligon's Tobacco Warehouse with Burd. Clark was exchanged September 21, 1862. He later served as captain in the 80th U.S. Colored Troops Infantry Regiment.



Figure 17a. Photo display of 29 items offered in a portion of the Burd Civil War archives (Courtesy Heritage Auctions)

Clark's carte de visite, Figure 13, is housed in the Library of Congress in the Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs.

Figure 14 is a cover from Lt. Charles Burd to his father, Samuel S. Burd, Esq., Belfast, Maine. It is noted at top as "From a Prisoner of War" and free franked by Alfred Ely, M.C. The postmark is from Washington, D.C., November 17, 1861. The enclosed letter, however, is headed Richmond, November 11, 1861, and addressed to James Brown. The letters and covers were likely mixed up in the correspondence, although it could be there were two letters enclosed and one person relayed to the other. It is hard to know.

Charles acknowledges receipt of \$10 sent with the November 11th letter pictured in Figure 15. He writes:

*I was very low with a fever, and my wounds very troublesome. I was also destitute of money and very low spirited. I should have gone under but for skillful treatments, and tender nursing, and the little dainties the money enabled me to buy. Your letter came through here in four days.*

*Please send me \$25 to buy under clothes etc. and charge to my accounts. If I ever return, my pay will make it good to you. I recovered from my fever to have a severe attack of Jaunders from which I am now recovering. I am now in the hospital, but hope to leave here this week. I have enough of the money you sent me to keep me in funds for some time, but I need clothing to keep me warm and prevent my taking colds so easily. I would like to be with you Thanksgiving... I trust father and Ed are well, and that Frank also is well. I have written my circumstances very frankly to you, but you must not worry about me, any of you. I do not fear death, and am in good spirits. I have not been frightened yet and hope not to be. I have made up my mind to live (God willing) and I shall try to.*

The letter (as with others) is signed "Your Bro, Chas. H. Burd." I believe James may be a half-brother or brother-in-law, owing to the different last name. When I saw "Jaunders" clearly penned in this very legible letter, I first assumed it was simply a misspelling of the word jaun-

An 1861 pencil sketch of Ligon's Tobacco Warehouse Prison by prisoner W.A. Abbott



Civilians, Union Military, even children, free black citizens, women acting as nurses and also serving as official nurses—and various wounded are shown in this famous painting as participants of one of the strangest wartime battles in history—Bull Run: a battle and a picnic.



Figure 17b. A small hinged leather case with four velvet-lined compartments contains two prisoner-art carved bone cufflinks, plus two halves of the bullet extracted from Lt. Burd's brain with part of the skull embedded in the bullet. (Courtesy Heritage Auctions)

dice. I looked it up on the internet and was surprised to find they are one and the same according to [drlogy.com](http://drlogy.com), a website in India. Nonetheless, it is anything but a common spelling alternative.

Figure 16 shows another Ely free franked POW cover to James W. Brown in Boston with "Mr. E. D. Burd, Belfast" noted in pencil at the

bottom left (his brother, Ed). Postmarked with a blurry December 1861 date from Washington. The enclosed letter is addressed to Charles' father and headed "Richmond Prison, Decr 14th 1861." He writes his wound has not healed but his health excellent, declaring the only medicine he takes is roast beef and pudding when he has the money.

*We are kept in close confinement. I have not been outside the prison except to the hospital and back since I've been here. The medicine the surgeons gave me at the hospital I threw over my shoulder, but derived great benefit from some given me by Dr. Fletcher of Indiana who is a prisoner here, and to his kindness and tender nursing I owe my life. I have made many friends from all the states... we all live together in a very free and easy style, and many a joke and happy hour we have, if we are prisoners. And if I return I shall often think with pleasure of the days when I looked through the bars! You must not worrie for me. I am doing well and not suffering.*

On November 21, 2008, Heritage Auctions offered a "Stacular archive and personal effects of Libby Prison inmate: 2nd Lieutenant Charles H. Burd, Co. F, 4th Maine Volunteers." The description stated Burd was a prisoner at Libby, to which he may have been transferred in March 1862 but, if so, it was but a fraction of his actual incarceration. He certainly spent most, if not all, of his time at Ligon's. I did not determine the exact date of his exchange, but he was in Fort Monroe, Virginia, in Union-occupied territory by late February 1862 before Libby Prison even opened. It seems highly unlikely he went back to Richmond after that.

The archive totaled 29 items which included letters, telegrams, and documents, cartes de visite, Burd's purple officer's sash, a prison spoon, pill box, leather change purse, razors with bone handles, spectacles, and more associated items. This was only a portion of the entire archive and by no means seemed to include all postal mail.

A photo display of the offered Burd archives, imaged by Heritage Auctions, is shown as Figure 17. It is an amazing array.

To me, the most remarkable physical artifact is the small hinged leather case with four velvet-lined compartments. These contain two prisoner-art bone cufflinks, one carved with a red cross and the other with a red heart, plus the two halves of the bullet extracted from Lt. Burd's brain with part of the skull embedded in the bullet. It is pictured in Figure 18.

One of the offered letters is from James W. Brown, headed Fort Monroe, Virginia, February 27, 1862, to "Ned" (likely Burd's brother). It reads, in part:

*Two of the most skilled surgeons in the U. S. removed the balance of the ball, which had passed thro' both tables of the brain. It was knitted to the bone...He is now walking the room while I write and from all appearances needs only quiet and care to be all right.*

Another letter from James Brown, headed Boston March 5, 1862, is also addressed to Ned. It reads, in part:

*I left Chas. in good health and first rate spirits...I brought home the bullet taken from his head at Ft. Monroe & also have the piece taken out by Dr. Banks on the field. They make quite a lump of lead...The surgeon, who had large practice in the Florida and Mexican wars, said he never saw so narrow an escape... Dr. Fletcher writes me that Lieut. Burd is as noble hearted a man as ever lived.*

The wartime saga of Lt. Burd is a captivating one. His could easily have been just one more heart-breaking battlefield casualty. We are fortunate to have postal artifacts to accurately tell by first-hand accounts the story of Burd's extremely close brush with death. And thanks are owed to Alfred Ely for facilitating mail delivery free of postage for his fellow prisoners.

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