WHY DOCUMENTS MATTER

AMERICAN ORIGINS AND THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

Selections from The Gilder Lehrman Collection

Edited by James G. Basker

Third edition, revised and expanded

THE GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN HISTORY
Why Documents Matter

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The Gilder Lehrman
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*Why Documents Matter* includes images, transcripts, and introductions to place the documents in historical context. If the image provided does not show the entire document, we have indicated the text that appears in the image in bold type and have also occasionally used a pointing finger in the margin when the starting point is in the middle of the transcript.

The Gilder Lehrman Institute provides many of these documents in other formats. You can search for multipage documents in our online catalog: www.gilderlehrman.org/collections. And each document in this booklet is coded to let you know where you can find additional resources on our website:

**C**: A *Common Core State Standards–based unit or lesson plan* incorporating this document can be found at www.gilderlehrman.org/common-core. Common Core units are available for documents on pages 10, 11, 20, 21, 38, 70, and 74.

**F**: A *Featured Primary Source* can be found at www.gilderlehrman.org/featuredprimarysources. Featured Primary Sources provide document-based questions for members of our Affiliate School Program. Featured Primary Sources are available for documents on pages 6–13, 18–25, 32–35, 38–40, 56–57, 60–61, 63–65, 70, 73–75.

**P**: A *poster* of this document can be purchased from the Gilder Lehrman History Shop at www.gilderlehrmanstore.org/sub_posters.html. Posters are available for documents on pages 10, 11, 20, 21, 38–41, 56–57, 62, 63, 67, 70, 73, Back Cover.
Introduction

This booklet of historic documents, presented in facsimile and transcription, has been compiled to provide materials for teachers and students at every level, K–12 and beyond. Documents such as these, including manuscripts by George Washington, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln, are central to teaching and learning in every history and civics class. They can be the focus of language arts and literacy education as well. But they are also of interest to the general reader because they not only serve as historical evidence, but also deepen and humanize our sense of history.

So, for example, students can compare the two versions of the US Constitution (pp. 20–21) included here—one a draft, the other the final version—and discover that the delegates who initially regarded themselves as representing “the States of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island . . .” within a few weeks had reconceived themselves as “We, the People of the United States.” Who could witness the moment of such a transformation and not be moved? A second example touches different emotions: the letter written in 1857 by Frederick Douglass, now a free man and a famous abolitionist in the North, to his former master, Hugh Auld, back in Maryland (p. 33). Certainly one of the only letters ever written by a former slave to his master, it challenges us to fathom the depths of humanity and understanding in a man who could write: “I feel nothing but kindness for you all – I love you, but hate slavery.” A third manuscript shows us Susan B. Anthony near the end of her life but still spirited, looking back on the progress of women’s rights over half a century, one hard-won step at a time (p. 61).

These and some forty other documents printed here are drawn from the Gilder Lehrman Collection, an archive of more than 60,000 important American historical documents. Richard Gilder and Lewis Lehrman, the philanthropists and history lovers who compiled the collection over many years, wanted it to reach the largest possible audience and to be useful, especially for teachers and students. They founded the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in 1994 and charged it with doing everything possible “to promote the study and love of American history,” particularly by disseminating and making available in various media the rare historic documents in their collection.

Everyone who reads this booklet will want to go on to explore the full range of offerings on the Gilder Lehrman website, www.gilderlehrman.org. There are thousands of additional historic documents, hundreds of videos and essays by great historians (such as Carol Berkin, Christopher Brown, James M. McPherson, and Gordon S. Wood), online exhibitions, educational materials, and more. Gilder Lehrman has programs in all fifty states, including traveling exhibitions, teacher awards, and essay prizes, so if you would like to know more about bringing what we offer into your school or community, please contact us. Meanwhile, enjoy this collection of unique historical materials, reproduced here to demonstrate “why documents matter.”

James G. Basker
President, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
Richard Gilder Professor of Literary History, Barnard College, Columbia University
Page 1 of Sebastian Brandt’s three-page letter to Henry Hovener, January 13, 1622. (GLC00708)
An Early Colonist Writes from Jamestown, 1622

This 1622 letter from Sebastian Brandt, a Jamestown colonist, to Henry Hovener, a Dutch merchant in London, provides a snapshot of the colony in flux. Brandt, who probably arrived in 1619 with a wave of 1,200 immigrants, writes matter-of-factly of the deaths of his wife and brother the previous year. Most of Brandt’s letter is devoted to its real purpose: putting in orders for cheese, vinegar, tools, spices, and other assorted goods that were not available in Virginia. Interestingly, he promises to pay in tobacco and furs—not in the gold and copper he’s seeking.

We know little about Brandt. He does not appear in any known official records, and historians presume he died not long after writing this letter. The glimpse he offers into early Jamestown serves as an example of the challenges facing North America’s early colonists.

Well beloved good friend Henry Hovener
My comendations remembred, I hartely wish your welfare for god be thanked I am now in good health, but my brother and my wyfe are dead aboute a yeare pass’d And touchinge the busynesse that I came hither is nothing yett performed, by reason of my sicknesse & weakenesse I was not able to travell up and downe the hills and dales of these countries but doe nowe intend every daye to walke up and downe the hills for good Mineralls here is both golde silver and copper to be had and therefore I will doe my endeavour by the grace of god to effect what I am able to performe And I intreat you to beseeche the Right Hon: & Wor: Company in my behalfe to grante me my freedome to be sent hither to me I doube not to doe well & good service in these countries humbly desyringe them also to provyde me some [appointed] fellowe & a strong boye to assiste me in my businesse, and that it maye please the aforesaid Company to send me at my charge a bed wth a bolster and cover and some Linnen for shirtes and sheetes. Sixe fallinge bands wth Last Size pairs of shoes twoo pairs of bootes three pairs of cullered stockings and garters wth three pairs of lether gloves some powder and shott twoo little runletts of oyle and vinnegar some spice & suger to comfort us here in our sicknesse abowte ffyftie pounds weight of holland and Englishe cheese together, Lykewyse some knyves, spoons, combes and all sorts of cullerd beads as you knowe the savage Indians use Allso one Rundlett wth all sortes of yron nayles great and small, three haire sives, two hatchetts wth twoo broad yrons and some Allum And send all these necessarie thinges in a dry fatt wth the first shippinge dyrected unto Mr. Pontes in James Towne here in Virginia And whatsoever this all costes I will not onely wth my moste humble service but allso wth some good Tobacco Bevor and Otterskins and other commodities here to be had recompence the Company for the same And yf you could send for my brother Phillipps Sonne in Darbesheere to come hether itt [were] a great commoditie ffor me or suche another used in minerall workes And thus I comitt you to the Allmighty.

Virginia 13 January 1622

Sebastian Brandt
Received from the honourable Thomas and Richard Penn, Esq, two and twenty Shareholders of the Proprietors of Penn's Manor in the hands of the honourable Dr. William Johnson, Esq., for the sum of ten thousand Dollars being the full consideration of the Land lately sold to them by the Six Nations of the Iroquois at the late Treaty of Fort Stanwix. The day received this twenty-eighth day of July—Anne, Queen 1769—for minerals and the other minerals of the said Nations and their confederates and dependant Tribes for whom we act and by whom we are appointed and empowered.

Nehemiah for the Mohawks

Indians

Engharacion

Onaghshion

Joseph Shaqueducka

For the Cayuga Nation by the desire of the whole

Shaqueducka

Joseph Taughvonan

Shonaherone

James Naiveone

Lodowike Asaphwastra
Receipt for Land Purchased from the Six Nations, 1769

This document records that the representatives of the Six Nations, who signed using totems to designate individuals and tribes, received $10,000 as payment for land the tribes had ceded in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768. The British authorities hoped to prevent further conflicts between white settlers and American Indians by forbidding the continued migration of white settlers and paying for lands they had already occupied. After giving up their land, the Six Nations dispersed, with some staying in western New York and others traveling north to Canada and west to Wisconsin. This dispossession of the Native American peoples was an integral part of the story of European colonization of the Americas, beginning with the first Spanish incursions in the late fifteenth century.

Received from the honorable Thomas and Richard Penn Esqrs true and absolute Proprietaries of Pennsylvania by the hands of the honorable Sir William Johnson Baronet the sum of ten thousand Dollars being the full consideration of the Lands lately sold to them by the Indians of the six Nations at the late Treaty of Fort Stanwix We say received this Twenty Eighth day of July—Anno Domini 1769—for ourselves and the other Indians of the six Nations and their confederates and dependant Tribes for whom we act and by whom we are appointed and empowered—

Wittness Present Nor'd MacLeod
Henry Frey Justice Pat: Daly [totem image] Abraham, for the Mohawks
Jacob K. Cook Justice [totem image] Johannes Tekaridoge
[totem image] For the Cajuga Nation [totem image] Lodowicke Aughsawata
by the desire of the whole—[totem image]
[totem image] Serrehoana
[totem image] Sayuni

A Receipt from the Six Nations for £1000 Currency or 10'000 Dollars.—
This hand-colored engraving by Paul Revere, artisan and patriot, elevates a street skirmish in Boston in 1770 into a “Massacre.” A brilliant piece of propaganda, it galvanized the colonists’ sentiments against repressive policies of the British.
The Declaration of Independence, 1776

Declaration of Independence, printed by Peter Timothy in Charleston, SC, ca. August 2, 1776. (GLC00959)

First printed in Philadelphia in July 1776, the Declaration of Independence was then sent to other cities for reprinting and dissemination. This copy, which is the sole survivor of a Charleston, South Carolina, printing in August 1776, did not surface until the 1990s. It is the first concrete proof that such a printing occurred, with the intention of spreading the news of American independence through the South Carolina hinterlands. By publishing his name, the patriotic printer, Peter Timothy, literally put his life on the line.
A Report from Spanish California, 1776

When this letter was written in 1776, British colonists on the East Coast of North America had recently declared their independence from Great Britain. In California, on the West Coast, Spanish soldiers and missionaries were just establishing a mission at San Francisco. Here (translated from the Spanish), Fernando de Rivera y Moncada, military commander in California, reports to the Viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Bucareli y Ursúa, in Mexico City, on his military decisions in the aftermath of an American Indian revolt, his work to rebuild missions that had been destroyed or evacuated, and his plans to move settlers north to the newly founded San Francisco.

October 20, 1776

Excelentísimo Señor

On the 14th of this month I left San Diego. Nothing new to report. All is quiet at that site. Thirteen prisoners shackled and two in stocks. The thirteen soldiers from Monterrey who were there are accompanying me. Shortly before leaving, I went to the guardhouse. I sent for Lieutenant Don José Francisco de Ortega. As soon as he arrived, I gave the soldiers their orders and informed them that they would be reporting to him. They are to assist in the reconstruction of Mission San Diego and then begin working on Mission San Juan Capistrano. At both missions they are to build their guardhouse. They are to assist the Fathers in whatever manner possible. Even though I am not ordering them to prepare the mud and make adobe bricks, there are always many other tasks and ways in which they can offer assistance, and by doing so they will be serving God and the king. I felt that I should share this information with Vuestra Excelencia exactly as I carried it out so as to demonstrate that I did not omit one single step. With regard to when work should begin on the missions I just mentioned, the only order that I gave the lieutenant is that he should not proceed until he is notified to do so by the Father President, who has remained at the presidio. That Father spoke with me about the second mission and he said that Indians from the Californias would be helping. I was pleased to hear that news. I left a servant boy behind to help at that mission.

When I was at San Diego I informed Vuestra Excelencia that I was planning on reducing the number of soldiers of the escort at this mission from where I am writing to you from nine to eight. Ultimately, I have decided not to reduce the number of soldiers for the time being, since this mission has been defended by nine for quite some time.

I am leaving with the intention of later heading to San Francisco. I will take the families that had stopped in Monterrey. Work will begin on the first mission and I will not move on to the other one until I receive new orders from Vuestra Excelencia to that effect. Just recently I learned that the Father President wants to situate the second mission along the riverbank and the route from Monterrey to that port because it would then be far from the fort. Since that is not the order I was given by Vuestra Excelencia, I await further orders. And with regard to the escort, I do not believe that six men is sufficient; there are two sites under consideration—one is eighteen leagues away from the fort and the other is more than twenty leagues away.

May God protect the esteemed life of Vuestra Excelencia for many years to come.

San Gabriel, October 20, 1776.

Excelentísimo Señor

Fernando de Rivera y Moncada

Excelentísimo Señor Bo Fr. Dn Antonio Bucareli y Ursúa
being long accustomed to command will make me to change your mercantile manner. I hope you will consider yourself an commander in chief of your own house - but be continued the act in the affair of Mr. Carter that there is but a thing as equal command. I feel this by experience always to expect to remain with you - pray be many of them to have love you - I am sure they must be very express - I am a part of one square letters which I express love you to be in a piece of your article. I am to beg no without learning that no account of his died for almost five years and in general when they happen, are well checked with these things but few. I had this extreme advantage.

Little Lucy who is without expectation the winter
child in the world - send you a love - but what I take it from my you - know the purpose that I hope but have "as it sometimes fear that a day advance the honor of this example man let you to forget me at some times - to know that it ever gave you pleasure to be in company with the least woman as the son will be worse than death to me - but it is not of my heart to the part to be separate to someone and the least of my sorrow to cause the most remote thought of that business had - I am not angry with you love me - I am not reason of your affection - I love you with a love so true and sincere as ever endure the human heart - but from a deficiency of my own I sometimes fear you will have no hope after losing so long from me. I give thanks may my life be before I have at it and making your true love.
Lucy Knox to Her Husband, General Henry Knox, on the Home Front and “Equal Command,” 1777

The daughter of loyalists who had fled to England at the start of the Revolutionary War, Lucy Knox stayed in Boston when her husband, Henry, joined the Continental Army. In these excerpts from a letter written on August 23, 1777, she discusses battlefield news, wartime profiteering, and family business and suggests that when General Knox returns home he should be willing to share “equal command” within the household.

... when I seriously reflect that I have lost my father Mother Brother and Sisters – intirely lost them – I am half distracted true I chearfully resigned them for one far dearer to me than all of them – but I am totally deprived of him – I have not seen him for almost six months ... I believe Genl Howe is a paltry fellow – but happy for as that he is so – are you not much pleased with the news from the Northard we think it is a great affair and a confirmation of St Clair’s villainy baseness – I hope he will not go unpunished – we hear also that Genl Gates is to go back to his command.– if so Master Schuyler, cannot be guiltless – it is very strange, you never mentioned that affair in any of your letters –

What has become of Mrs Green, do you all live together – or how do you manage – is Billy to remain with you payless or is he to have a commission – if he understood business he might without a capital have made a fortune – people here – without advancing a shilling frequently clear hundreds in a day – Such chaps as Eben Oliver, are all men of fortune – while persons who have ever lived in affluence, are in danger of want – oh that you had less of the military man about you – you might then after the war have lived at ease all the days of your life – but now I don’t know what you will do – your being long acustomed to command will make you too haughty for mercantile matters – tho I hope you will not consider yourself as commander in chief of your own house – but be convinced tho not in the affair of Mr. Coudre that there is such a thing as equal command— I send this by Capt. Randal who says he expects to remain with you – pray how many of these lads have you – I am sure they must be very expensive – I am in want of some square dollars – which I expect from you, to by me a peace of linen an article I can do no longer without having had no recruit of that kind for almost five years – girls in general when they marry – are well stocked with those things but poor I had no such advantage

little Lucy who is without exception the sweetest child in the world – sends you a kiss – but where that I take it from say you – from the paper I hope – but dare I say I sometimes fear that a long absence the force of bad example may lead you to forget me at sometimes – to know that it ever gave you pleasure to be in company with the finest woman in the world, would be worse than death to me – but it is not so, my Harry is too just too delicate too sincere – and too fond of his Lucy to admit the most remote thought of that distracting kind – away with it – dont be angry with me my Love – I am not jealous of your affection – I love you with a love as true and sacred as ever entered the human heart – but from a diffidence of my own merit I sometimes fear you will love me less after being so long from me – if you should may my life end before I know it, that I may die thinking you wholly mine – Adieu my love LK
around as the fiftieth year of my life and afflicted with amputated arms and as is afflicted with rheumatic disease thereby the labor of my hands is wholly cut off, and with is the only means of my support. — My family at this time consists of a wife and three poor children, three of whom are so young as to be unable to support themselves and the time of their another has a wife engaged in taking care of myself and our little ones — Thus gentlemen, in this my extremity I am induced to call on you for assistance; and in the character of an inhabitant of the town of Medfield, for I have no such claim, but as a stranger accidentally fallen within your borders, one who has not the means of subsistence, if in favor one, who must have through want of desire unless turned by the protecting hand of your care.

Dear gentlemen your true servant,

Peter Kiteredge
Medfield April 26, 1806

To the selectmen of the town of Medfield.
African American Veteran Peter Kiteredge Requests Aid, 1806

In this very rare document, Peter Kiteredge, a former slave who fought for five years in the American Revolution, petitions town officials in Medfield, Massachusetts, for financial support. Fifty-eight years old and unable to work due to “a complaint” he has suffered since the war, he seeks help for his wife and four children. Kiteredge was illiterate and signed his petition with an “X.” Scholars estimate that more than 10,000 African American men served in the American forces during the Revolutionary War.

Gentlemen

I beg leave to state to you my necessitious circumstances, that through your intervention I may obtain that succour, which suffering humanity ever requires. Borne of African parents & as I apprehend in Boston, from whence while an infant I was removed to Rowley and from thence again to Andover into the family of Doct. Jhan Kiteridge, with whom, as was then the lot of my unfortunate race, I passed the best part of my life as a slave. At the age of twenty-five In the year of our Lord 1775 or 6 & in the twentyfifth of my age I entered into the servise of the U.S. as a private soldier where I continued five years and where I contracted a complaint from which I have suffered in a greater or less degree ever since & with which I am now afflicted. After leaving the army to become a sailor for two years; when I quited the sea & resided for some time in Newtown, from whence I went to Natick where I remained for a short time and then removed to Dover where I remained tarried as a day labourer during the period of seven years. Eight years past I removed to the place where I now live, & have until this time, by my labour, assisted by the kindness of the neighbouring inhabitants been enabled to support myself and family. At present having arrived at the fifty eight year of my life and afflicted with severe and as I apprehend with incurable diseases whereby the labour of my hands is wholly cut off, and with it the only means of my support. — My family at this time consists of a wife and three four children, three of whom are so young as to be unable to support them selves and the time of their mother has is wholly occupied in taking cair of myself & our little ones — Thus gentlemen, in this my extremity I am induced to call on you for assistance; not in the character of an inhabitant of the town of Medfield, for I have no such claim, but as a stranger accidentally fallen within your borders, one who has not the means of subsistence, & in fact, one, who must fail through want & disease unless sustained by the fostering hand of your care.

I am Gentlemen your mos obedient, most humble servant.

Peter Kiteredge

his X mark

Attest:  Ebenezer Clark
         Paul Hither
Medfield 26 April 1806
To the gentlemen Select men of the town of Medfield
Dear Sir,

Your favor of the 20. ult. did per reach me this about the ten p.m. – It found me in a fever, from which I am now but sufficiently recovered to attend to business. I mention this to show that I had not in my power to give an answer to your propositions sooner.

With respect to the first.

I never mean (unless some particular circumstances should compel me to it) to propose another slave by purchase; it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by which slavery in this country may be abolished by slow, sure, & imperceptible degrees. With respect to the 2d, I recollect, her Rev. intend to purchase a military certificate; – I see no difference it makes with you (if it is one of the funds allocated for the discharge of my claim) to the the Purchaser.
George Washington to John Mercer on Ending Slavery, 1786

In this letter to a fellow Virginian and plantation owner, George Washington expresses his aversion to the institution of slavery: “I never mean . . . to possess another slave by purchase.” He looks to the legislature to adopt a plan by which “slavery in this Country may be abolished by slow, sure, & imperceptible degrees.”

Mount Vernon 9th Sep 1786

Dear Sir,

Your favor of the 20th Ulto. did not reach me till about the first inst. – It found me in a fever, from which I am now but sufficiently recovered to attend to business. – I mention this to shew that I had it not in my power to give an answer to your propositions sooner. —

With respect to the first. I never mean (unless some particular circumstances should compel me to it) to possess another slave by purchase; it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by the Legislature by which slavery in this Country may be abolished by slow, sure, & imperceptible degrees. – With respect to the 2d, I never did, nor never intend to purchase a military certificate; – I see no difference it makes with you (if it is one of the funds allotted for the discharge of my claim) who the purchaser is. If the depreciation is 3 for 1 only, you will have it in your power whilst you are at the receipt of Custom – Richmond – where it is said the great regulator of this business (Greaves) resides, to convert them into specie at that rate. – If the difference is more, there would be no propriety, if I inclined to deal in them at all, in my taking them at that exchange.

I shall rely on your promise of Two hundred pounds in five Weeks from the date of your letter. — It will enable me to pay the workmen which have been employed ab’ this house all the Spring & Summer, (some of whom are here still). – But there are two debts which press hard upon me. One of which, if there is no other resource, I must sell land or negroes to discharge. – It is owing to Govr. Clinton of New York, who was so obliging as to borrow, & become my security for £2500 to answer some calls of mine. – This sum was to be returned in twelve months from the conclusion of the Peace. – For the remains of it, about Eight hundred pounds york Cy. I am now paying an interest of Seven pC, but the high interest (tho’ more than any estate can bear) I should not regard, if my credit was not at stake to comply with the conditions of the loan. – The other debt tho’ I know the person to whom it is due wants it, and I am equally anxious to pay it, might be put of a while longer. – This sum is larger than the other

I am. D’ Sir

Yr. Most Obed’ Hble Ser

Go: Washington
We the People of the States of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina, South-Carolina, and Georgia, do ordain, declare and establish the following Constitution for the Government of Ourselves and our Posterity.

ARTICLE I.
The sole of this Government shall be "The United States of America."

II.
The Government shall consist of supreme legislative, executive and judicial powers.

III.
The legislative power shall be vested in a Congress, to consist of two houses of representatives, and a Senate; each of which shall, in all cases, have a negative on the other. The legislature shall meet on the first Monday in December in every year.

IV.

Sec. 1. The Members of the House of Representatives shall be chosen every second year, by the people of the several States comprehended within this Union. The qualifications of electors shall be the same, from time to time, as those of the electors in the several States, of the most numerous branch of their legislatures.

Sec. 2. Every Member of the House of Representatives shall be of the age of twenty-five years at least; shall have been a citizen of the United States for at least three years before his election; and shall be, at the time of his election, a resident of the State in which he shall be chosen.

Sec. 3. The House of Representatives shall, at its first formation, and until the number of citizens and inhabitants shall be taken in the manner herein after described, consist of sixty-five members, of whom three shall be chosen in New-Hampshire, eight in Massachusetts, one in Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, five in Connecticut, six in New-York, four in New-Jersey, eight in Pennsylvania, one in Delaware, five in Maryland, ten in Virginia, five in North-Carolina, five in South-Carolina, and three in Georgia.

Sec. 4. As the proportion of numbers in the different States shall alter from time to time; as some of the States may by chance be divided; as others may be enlarged by addition of territory; as two or more States may be united; as new States shall be erected within the limits of the United States, the Legislature shall, in each of those cases, regulate the number of representatives by the number of inhabitants, according to the preceding article after a census, of one of every forty thousand inhabitants shall, from time to time, be taken. To a census hereafter taken. This shall in every census be done within seven years, from each census. If the number of inhabitants of the State should exceed the number of representatives which they are entitled to, the additional representatives shall be elected by the House of Representatives. If the number of inhabitants of the State should be less than the number of representatives which they are entitled to, the representatives shall continue in their places until the number of inhabitants of the State shall exceed the number of representatives which they are entitled to; and the additional representatives shall be elected by the House of Representatives, at any time before the census, if they should think fit.

Sec. 5. All bills for raising or appropriating money, and for fixing the salaries of the officers of government, shall originate in the House of Representa- tives, and shall not be altered or amended by the Senate. No money shall be drawn from the public Treasury, but in pursuance of appropriations that shall originate in the House of Representatives.

Sec. 6. The House of Representatives shall have the sole power of impeachment. It shall choose its Speaker and other officers.

Sec. 7. Vacancies in the House of Representatives shall be supplied by writ of election from the executive authority of the State, in the representation from which they shall happen.
The final text of the Constitution was printed on September 17, 1787, and distributed to the delegates, among whom Benjamin Franklin, aged eighty-one, was the senior member. Franklin signed this copy as a gift for his nephew Jonathan Williams.
Angelica Church’s letter to her brother Philip J. Schuyler, July 11, 1804. (GLC07882)
Angelica Church to Her Brother after the Hamilton-Burr Duel, 1804

Mere hours after the duel between Alexander Hamilton, former secretary of the treasury, and Vice President Aaron Burr in 1804, Angelica Church, Hamilton’s sister-in-law, expresses her futile hope that he would recover. The hasty scrawl of her handwriting suggests the degree of her distress.

at Wm Bayards Greenwich

My dear Brother

Wednesday Morn

I have the painful task to inform you that General Hamilton was this morning woun[ded] by that wretch Burr but we have every reason to hope that he will recover. May I advice that you repair immediately to my father, as perhaps he may wish to come down – My dear Sister bears with saintlike fortitude this affliction.

The Town is in consternation; and there exists only the expression of Grief & Indignation.

Adieu my dear Brother remember me to Sally, ever yours

A Church
Stephen Austin’s Contract to Settle Colonists in Texas, 1825

In order to settle Texas, the Mexican government allowed empresarios such as Stephen Austin to acquire vast tracts of land (sometimes millions of acres) if they agreed to bring in colonists. Austin brought thousands of settlers into the Mexican province of Texas and established dozens of communities. The excerpts from this contract with the Mexican government from 1825 include the Mexican government’s requirements that the settlers be “Catholics, and of good morals” and that Spanish be the official language of the colony.

Conditions on which the Empresario Stephen F. Austin is authorised by the Govt of the State of Cuahuila and Texas to Colonize 500 families on the vacant Lands remaining within the Limits of the Colony already established by kind, in the Department of Texas. . . .

3d. In Conformity with the said Law of Colonization of the [24th] March the said Empresario Citizen Stephen F. Austin shall be obliged to introduce the said families within the term of 6 years Counting from the day on which these Conditions are signed by the said Empresario under the penalty of loosing the rights and benefits granted to him by the 8th Article of the said Law.

4th The families which are to Compose this Colony besides being industrious as he offers in his petition must be Catholics, and of good morals proving these qualifications by the documents required by the 5th Article of the said Law of Colonization of the 24th March.

5 He shall be obliged not to admit in the new Colony Criminals, Vagabonds, or Men of bad Conduct or Character, and Cause such as are within his limits to leave it and should it be necessary he shall drive them out by force of arms.

6th For this purpose he shall organize the new Colonists in a body of National Militia of which he shall be the Chief until otherwise ordered.

7th As soon as he shall have introduced 100 families at least he shall notify the Govt thereof in order that a Commissioner may be sent on with the Competent instructions to put the new Colonists in possession of their Lands and to establish Towns in Conformity with the Law.

8th Official Communications with the Govt or with the authorities of the State, instruments of writing and other public acts, must be written in Spanish, and when new Towns are formed it shall be his duty to establish Spanish Schools in them.

9 It shall also be his duty to promote the erection of Churches in said Towns and that they are provided with ornaments, holy vases and other things necessary for divine worship and in the proper time to solicit the necessary number of Pasters for the Administration of Spiritual affairs. . . .

The foregoing Conditions were accepted and signed by the Empresario Stephen F. Austin on the 4th of June 1825 on the 20th May 1825 the Governor of the State by an Official order increased the number of Families to Five Hundred.

Stephen F. Austin
In 1835, the Mexican legislature proclaimed the town of Los Angeles a city and, at the same time, named it the capital of Alta California. Despite this official pronouncement, Los Angeles did not become the capital in reality. Monterey, which had been the capital of Baja and Alta California since 1776, remained the seat of the government until 1845.
This nineteenth-century advertisement for a book on the Amistad incident dramatizes the heroism of the Africans who revolted against their enslavement in 1839. The book promises a detailed account of how “the African captives . . . in order to obtain their freedom, and return to Africa . . . rose upon the Captain and crew of the vessel.”
A New Map of Texas Oregon and California

Published by S. Augustus Mitchell

EXPLANATION:

EMIGRANT ROUTE FROM MISSOURI TO OREGON.
Mapping the US Claim to the West, 1845

Drawn in 1845 and printed in 1846, this map was advertised as “compiled from the most recent authorities.” It reveals a land on the brink of dramatic changes as the boundaries of the United States would shift significantly in the late 1840s.

Texas was annexed as a state in the last days of 1845, a treaty with Great Britain set the boundary of Oregon to delineate the United States and Canada, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between the US and Mexico added California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and roughly half of New Mexico and Colorado to the United States.

The detail below describes the “Emigrant Route from Missouri to Oregon,” providing the means by which citizens of the United States and new immigrants could populate and establish control over the newly acquired lands.

A New Map of Texas, Oregon and California with the Regions Adjoining Compiled from the Most Recent Authorities, published by S. Augustus Mitchell, Philadelphia, PA, 1846. (GLC02130)
Dear Sister,

It is one year to day since I left Newburgh. I have not received a single letter from home. I have written five. It is poor business. I have sold a horse for $400. The last letter I wrote to you was in the mines on the Yuba River with a gudgeon. The machine I was offered 600 dollars for it went to work done very well for a short time. We could not work but the rainy season came on so early this year. Dawing the river to we could not due to any advantage. Machine fell to all most any price we took 25 dollars for it.

I have sold the boat with a young lawyer. The sale of the boat at 60 dollars as near as I can see. I can save the 125 dollars on the boat was worth 100 at that time. But I have no positive proof my partner and I commenced in this city by purchasing a grocery store. Lease paying at both more work. Took a kick as partner had no money almost 25 percent on his one third of the capital invested agreed to tend it. Hawley himself did all at Castle for 10 dollars a day as long as we could get. Yet to do was doing well I found ourselves for but a little it a week. While others was paying 20 doll. Perhaps we lived the best after all.
Tales from the California Gold Rush, 1850

Augustus Neafie left his home in Newburgh, New York, in search of gold, arriving in California by ship on August 28, 1849. In a series of fascinating letters to his father and sister, Neafie tells of his work as a prospector along the American River. After working with different mining companies, Neafie purchased a grocery store in Sacramento, but a flood destroyed the provisions in his store. In the letter excerpted here Neafie writes, “if any body should ask my advise I would tell them if they can live at all keep a way from California,” highlighting the trying conditions miners faced and the often disappointing returns.

Sacramento City Jan 28/50

Dear Sister

It is one year to day since I left Newburgh & I have not recived a single letter from home. I have written five it is poor incourgement for mee at present I have sent by the expresses several times, the last letter I wrote that we was in the mines one the Yuba River with a quicksiver Machine & was offered 600 Dollars for it went to work done very well for what time we could work but the rainy season came on so early this year raising the River so we could not dig to any advantage Machines fell to all most any price we took 250 Dollars for ours.

I had left the Boat with a young Lawyer he took to drink & sold it for 450 Dollars as near as I could find out & gave me 125 Doll Boats was worth 500 at that time but I had no positive proof my Pardner & I commenced in this city by purchasing a Grocerie Store & base filling it with more stock . . .

We got out of work so I went to the mines on the American River to prospect built a smal dam on a raine & took 80 Dollars out in one hour two of us then it began to rain continued for three days the River raised 25 feet & drowned 8 persons who wer encampt on an Iland som 3 wer Chinees men & now I supose you are going from places with Sleigh bells a jingling but oh me how diferent with us Large Sail boats ar seen Sailing up & down the Street with Provisions & Furniture seeking higher ground about a mile off som had to pay 10 Dollars for Lodging the first night after paying 5 Dol for being set on the other side of the street Board was 30 Dol a week, only 4 houses but what was rendered unfit for business it was seven feet in our store destroyed most all we had so the world goes it is up & down . . .

We have just now closed a bargin renting the building next to ours which is set up on Post 3 feet high for a boarding house & shall carry on both buiseness at present I expect to see a very sickly time here next summer I think we shall go to the mines the first of june if any body should ask my advise I would tell them if they can live at all keep a way from California not that I am sorry that I started because I can live if any one can & under go as much hardship it is quite dark I must close . . . you must write as soon as you read this mention every thing that will interest me tell James I should like to hear from him if any of the Boys ask about me tell them that if they pick out all the handsom Girls I shall have to fetch one with me & take the Shine off of theirs I begin to talk Spanish have traded with Indians up on th yuba considerable . . . fill two Sheets I will pay for it if it is 20 Dollars I send this by express cant think of any thing else

Your affectionate

Brother A Neafie
Hugh Auld Esq.

My dear Sir:

My heart tells me that you are too noble to treat with indifference the request I am about to make. It is twenty years since I ran away from you, or rather rest from you, but from slavery, and since then I have often felt a strong desire to hold a little correspondence with you and to learn something of the position and prospects of your dear children. They were dear to me and are still—indeed, I feel nothing but kindness for you all. I love you, but hate slavery. Now my dear Sir, will you favor me by dropping me a line, telling me in what year I came to live with you in Alexandria? The year the frigate was built by Mr. Becharl. The information is not for publication and shall not be published. We are all hastening where all distinctions are ended, Kindness to the humblest will not be unrewarded.

Perhaps you have heard that I have seen Miss Amanda that was Mrs. Sears that is, and was treated kindly such is the fact, gladly would I see you and Mrs. Auld or Miss Sopha as I used to call her. I would have lived with you during life in freedom though I ran away from you so unceremoniously, I did not know how soon I might be sold. But I hate to talk about that. A line from you will find me Resident Fred. Douglass Rochester N. York. I am dear Sir very truly yours Fred. Douglass
Frederick Douglass to His Former Owner, 1857

Following his escape from slavery in Maryland to freedom in New York in 1838, Frederick Douglass became a leader of the abolition movement and its best-known orator. As was the case with many who were born slaves, he did not know his own birthday and wrote to his former master hoping for information on his date of birth. Here, in an extraordinary display of forgiveness, Douglass writes to Hugh Auld, his former master: “I love you, but hate Slavery.” This copy of the letter is in Auld’s handwriting (you can see Douglass’s hand on page 58). Auld copied this out, apparently to send to family members while he retained the original.

Rochester Oct. 4th 1857

Hugh Auld Esq.

My dear sir:

My heart tells me that you are too noble to treat with indifference the request I am about to make. It is twenty years since I ranaway from you, or rather not from you but from Slavery, and since then I have often felt a strong desire to hold a little correspondence with you and to learn something of the position and prospects of your dear children. They were dear to me—and are still—indeed I feel nothing but kindness for you all. I love you, but hate Slavery. Now my dear Sir, will you favor me by dropping me a line, telling me in what year I came to live with you in Aliceanna St. the year the Frigate was built by Mr. Beacham—The information is not for publication—and shall not be published. We are all hastening where all distinctions are ended, kindness to the humblest will not be unrewarded.

Perhaps you have heard that I have seen Miss Amanda that was, Mrs. Sears that is, and was treated kindly. Such is the fact. Gladly would I see you and Mrs. Auld or Miss Sopha as I used to call her. I could have lived with you during life in freedom though I ranaway from you so unceremoniously. I did not know how soon I might be sold. But I hate to talk about that. A line from you will find me Addressed Fredk Douglass

Rochester N. York.    I am dear sir very truly yours,    Fred: Douglass

Frederick Douglass, from My Bondage and My Freedom (Auburn, NY: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855). (GLC05820)
A fragment of Abraham Lincoln’s “House Divided” speech, ca. 1857–1858. (GLC02533)
Abraham Lincoln’s “House Divided” Speech Notes, 1858

In these speech notes, Abraham Lincoln offers an early formulation of the ideas he would advance in his campaign for the US Senate in 1858. Lincoln identified slavery as a moral and political issue that threatened the continued existence of the United States. Invoking the biblical passage “A house divided against itself can not stand,” he declared, “I believe this government can not endure permanently, half slave, and half free.”

Why, Kansas is neither the whole, nor a tithe of the real question—
“A house divided against itself can not stand”
I believe this government can not endure permanently, half slave, and half free—
I expressed this belief a year ago; and subsequent developments have but confirmed me.

I do not expect the Union to be dissolved— I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided— It will become all one thing, or all the other— Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and put it in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawfull in all the states, old, as well as new— Do you doubt it? Study the Dred Scott decision, and then see, how little, even now, remains to be done—

That decision may be reduced to three points— The first is, that a negro can not be a citizen— That point is made in order to deprive the negro in every possible event, of the benefit of that provision of the U. S constitution which declares that: “The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privelages and immunities of citizens in the several States.”

The second point is, that the U. S constitution protects slavery, as property, in all the U. S. territories, and that neither congress, nor the people of the territories, nor any other power, can prohibit it, at any time prior to the formation of State constitutions—

This point is made, in order that the territories may safely be filled up with slaves, before the formation of State constitutions, and thereby to embarrass the free state sentiment, and enhance the chances of slave constitutions being adopted.

The third point decided is that the voluntary bringing of Dred Scott into Illinois by his master, and holding him here a long time as a slave, did not operate his emancipation, did not make him free.
It must close by next Spring, if it does not I shall almost begin to think that the peace ought to this them. Thank you a mere era has dawned to an of liberty, civilization is rolling one. I have reference to the President proclamation the "year of jubilee" has indeed come to the poor Slave. The proclamation is a death-blow to slavery, because nothing could a majority of the slave states will be in arms against the Government in the 1st of January, 1863. The name of Abraham Lincoln will be forever known to posterity as one of the greatest benefactors of his Country, not impeached of the immortal Washington, himself. Besides I have expected, and what I have hoped for. We now know what we are fighting for, we have an object, and that object is known. Some may expect that the armies of the Union will be victorious, that an omnipotent and just God will favor us, and crown our efforts with success. Oh! what
A Union Soldier on the Emancipation Proclamation, 1862

John Jones was a Union soldier in the 45th Illinois Infantry. In this excerpt from a letter to his wife, he responds enthusiastically to the news that President Lincoln had announced the Emancipation Proclamation: “The ‘Year of Jubilee’ has indeed come to the poor Slave. . . . The name of Abraham Lincoln will be handed down to posterity, as one of the greatest benefactors of his Country.”

Jackson Tenn, Oct. 3/1862

My Dear Wife

I received your letter yesterday, and now proceed to answer it, as I have a little time on my hands this evening, and I do not know that I can spend it in a more profitable way. Certainly, I can not spend it in a more agreeable way than in writing to one in whom my fondest hopes of happiness are centered. It is just a year ago today Mary that I became a servant of Uncle Sam. I hardly thought then that I should have to be a Soldier so long as a year, but now I don't know but my chance is good for a year or two more. Well one third of my time is served at any rate, even if the war lasts so long, but I do not think it will. It must close by next Spring, if it does not I shall almost begin to think that we never ought to whip them. Thank God a new era has dawned, the car of liberty and civilisation is rolling on. I have reference to the President's proclamation. The “Year of Jubilee” has indeed come to the poor Slave. The proclamation is a deathblow to Slavery, because without doubt a majority of the Slaves States will be in arms against the Government on the 1st of January 1862 [sic]. The name of Abraham Lincoln will be handed down to posterity, as one of the greatest benefactors of his Country, not surpassed by the immortal Washington himself. It is what I have expected, and what I have hoped for. We now know what we are fighting for, we have an object, and that object is avowed. Now we may expect that the armies of the Union will be victorious, that an Omnipotent and just God will favor us, and crown our efforts with success. Oh! what a day for rejoicing will it be, when America the boasted “land of the free and home of the brave” shall have erased from its fair escutcheon the black stain of human Slavery. The majority of the people, and of the Soldiers will sustain the President in his act, it is well received by the army in this department, believed to be the right thing at the right time. . . .
Issued January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was a carefully crafted document in which Lincoln, as commander in chief, justified emancipation as a military act against the states in rebellion. This copy of a rare lithograph, designed by a fourteen-year-old boy in California, was sent to Washington, DC, where Lincoln signed it.
Following the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation, Frederick Douglass (listed third in the first column) and other abolitionists joined in a national call for black men to enlist in the Union army. This recruiting poster printed in Philadelphia in 1863 makes a powerful appeal in the name of various leaders in the African American community. By the war’s end more than 200,000 African Americans had served in the Union military forces.
Isaac and Rosa were among the slaves freed when the Union captured New Orleans. Such photographs were sold in the North to generate sympathy and raise funds to help former slaves, some of them obviously mixed race.

"Isaac & Rosa, Slave Children from New Orleans," photographed by Myron H. Kimball, New York, NY, 1863. (GLC05111.02.1051)
Appearing confident and youthful at age fifty-one during the 1860 presidential campaign, Lincoln would come to show on his physiognomy the suffering of the next few years, as is evident in these photographs taken during the presidential campaign and three years later, just before President Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address.
James Mr. Court of Camden. It is a fine
man & the best officer in the Regiment.
I think he knows as much as he says he don't.
I think we will never have another fight.
Without we have to go to Richmond after
the fall of Charleston S.C. if we do we
will have another battle. Something like
the Battle of Gettysburg. But I hope we shall never
get into another fight like that at
Gettysburg Pa. for it was awful beyond Dis
cription. I cannot describe it with my pen,
but if don't get to come home myself
this fall I will try to give you a Charley
sketch of it, but I think you
would not care to read the details of the
fight as it was. I will just say I sat on
my knees by the side of stone fence & loaded
my gun until I had little in my
fingers as big as 10 cent pieces from Ramming
down the loader. My gun was so hot I could
not touch the barrel with my hands so some
most of the others I never waited to load.
“Awful beyond Discription”: A Union Soldier after Gettysburg, 1863

The Union victory at the Battle of Gettysburg on July 3, 1863, was a turning point of the Civil War. Between Lee’s and Meade’s armies, 160,000 men fought and there were approximately 50,000 casualties—killed, missing, and wounded. Union soldier David V. M. Smith recalls in this letter how hard-won the victory was and describes the devastation that followed, even for the victors as they scavenged the battlefield for weapons, food, and other supplies.

Camp Near Bristo Station Near the Orange & Alexandria Rail Road Va Aug 8th 1863

Dear Elizabeth I sit down to write you a few lines to let you all know how I am getting along our Division is now doing pickett duty one half of the Regiment goes out one day & Comes into camp the next & the other half lays on Reserve which makes us on duty all the time which we should have considered very hard duty but after we have had such a hard march as we have had We take it as a great favour to have the privilege of Picketing as we are now doing . . . . Our Captain James McComb of Camden NJ is a fine man & the best officer in the Regiment I think & knows as much he says he dont think we will ever have another fight without we have to go to Richmond after the fall of Charleston SC & if we do we will have another Battle Something like the Battle of Waterloo & that will end the war but I hope we shall never get into another fight like that at Gettysburg Pa for it was awful beyond Discription I cannot discribe it with my pencil but if dont get to come home myself this fall I will try to give you or Charley a slight sketch of it but I think you would not care to Read the details of the fight as it was. I will just say I sit on my knees by the side of Stone fence & loaded & fired my gun until I had blisters on my fingers as big as 10 cent peaces from Ramming down the loads & my gun was so hot I could not touch the Barrel with my hands & so was most the others I never wanted to load & shoot so fast in all my life life before I see by the papers I got from some of you 3 in number on the 5th inst that we captured 2 stand of Rebel colores that is a mistake our Regiment got 7 colers from the Rebs & our Division got 17 in all to my own personall knowledge. we had been short of goal for a day or 2 as our waggons could not come up to us so after the battle was over some of our fellows went in among the dead to get their Haversacks they come back with short or long cakes which ever you may call them & some good buiscuits I tried to beg some but that was of no use so the Captain told me I was about as stout hearted as any of them I had better go and get some as there was plenty on the feild so I took my gun in one hand & my knife in the other & I started on the hardest mission I had ever been on the ground being nearly covered with dead & wounded the wounded crying for help & water & to be killed & so on that I could not stand it so I cut 2 Haversacks off of 2 dead men picked up as many guns on the feild as I could carry & went back to [text loss] stone fence again I got cakes & good fresh mutton well cooked enough for 6 or 8 of us the Rebel Sharp Shooters was popping away at us all the time but they did not hit me & when we buryed the dead there was loads of cakes laying about the battle field. I must now close as my paper is getting full I sent a letter to Charley the other day I suppose you have got it as the mail now goes very Regular write soon & often & will write to you as often as I can So I bid you all good bye hoping this may find you all well

From Your Affectionate Husband & Father

D V M Smith
Camp near Bunker Hill July 18, 1863

My Dear Sister,

I sent my self to drop you a few lines to let you know that I am well at this time, we have had a hardness time of it for the last six or seven weeks we left Frederick being on the 21st of June and marched at the rate of twenty miles a day until we got in to Pennsylvania and fought one of the bloodiest Battles of the war we passed through some of the freest Country that I ever saw in my life and some of the freest Women that I ever saw they are mostly Dutch they have the finest horses you ever saw all made of brick and there is a house every half mile, our Generals would not allow us to touch a thing once
“One of the Bloodliest Battles”: A Confederate after Gettysburg, 1863

After the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the Confederates retreated and kept moving until they reached western Virginia. In this letter, “Bud,” a Confederate soldier, describes the hardships endured by Lee’s men and reports on the deaths and injuries among friends and relatives his family would have known. Bud’s stoic tone foreshadows the downward trajectory of the rest of the war for the Confederate army—flour-and-water rations, marching barefoot, high casualties, and military defeats.

Camp Near Bunker hill July the 18, 63

My Dear Sister

I seat my self to drop you a few lines to let you know that I am well at this time. we have had a hard time of it for the last six weeks. we left Fredericksburg on the 2 day of June, and marched at the rate of twenty miles a day until we got in to Pennsylvania and fought one of the Bloodliest Battles of the war we passed throgh some of the prettiest Country that I ever saw in my life [that] has of the finest land in it in the [world] and some of the ugliest women that I ever saw they are mostly Dutch. they have the finest houses you ever saw all made of Brick and there is a house every half mile. our Generals would not allow us to touch a thing and the consequence was we had to live on one pound of flour to the man for four days I had to eat wheat I would take it and Boil it in a cup and salt it and then eat it and it was good at least it good to a hungry man. I received your letter of the 21 of June on the 10th of this month and was glad to learn that you were all well I wish that I could have been at home during commencement you must give my love to all the girls sis I am (Bare Footed) hant got a Shoe to my name, sis you must excuse my short letter this time for this is all the paper that I have got in this world I have not seen Jim on the march I heard from him since the fight he was not hurt Cousin Ben is well at this time Willie Gunnels was left in the hands of the enemy he was hit in the side with a grape shot, and it broke three of his ribs but the shot did not go through the skin Joel Anderson was wounded, but he was not left we lost (80) men in our Regt in all killed wounded and missing I did not get hit but I thought that they would hit me every time they shot there was not one man in our company that was badly hurt there was four of them got slightly wounded but are with the company at this time sis you must excuse my short letter for this is all the paper that I have to write on this tim I will give you all the news the next time I write which will be in a few days nothing more at this time give my love to ma and the rest of the family nothing more

I remain your affectionate

Bud
I am last night give dear love your letter of the 22d. It has given me great comfort. God knows how I love your dear dear wife, how I love her memory is to me, how I mourn her loss. One grief could not be greater if you had been taken from me. For one the equally dear to me, my heart is too full to speak on this subject, nor can I write. But my grief is not for her, but for ourselves. She is happily happier than ever, safe from all evil and suffering, in her Heavenly abode. May God in his mercy enable her to join her in eternal praise to our Lord in heaven, and us humble bow ourselves before the throne of God and offer perpetual praise for her deliverance!

But she cannot indulges in grief known. Meanful event pleasing. Our County demands all our thoughts, all our energies, to resist the powerful combination and forming against us, until every man at his place. If fighting we have something to hope for in the future. If defeat, nothing will be left us to hope for. I have not heard what action has been taken by the St. in answer to my recommendations concerning the organization.
Robert E. Lee Consoles His Newly Widowed Son, 1864

In this letter, Confederate General Robert E. Lee attempts to console his son William Fitzhugh “Rooney” Lee on the loss of Rooney’s wife, but the military commander comes through as well, as he calls on his son to return to his brigade. The letter demonstrates the emotion that Lee felt for his family and offers a glimpse of the strength that carried him through the war. His faith in God, his empathy for others’ misfortunes, and his belief in the Confederate cause all granted Lee the fortitude he needed to endure the war. This letter reveals some of the qualities that made Lee so revered in his own time.

Camp Orange Co: 24 Apr ’64

I rec’d last night My dear Son your letter of the 22nd. It has given me great Comfort. God knows how I loved your dear dear Wife, how Sweet her memory is to me, & how I mourn her loss. My grief Could not be greater if you had been taken from me. You were both equally dear to me. My heart is too full to speak on this Subject, nor Can I write. But my grief is not for her, but for ourselves. She is brighter & happier than ever, Safe from all evil & awaiting us in her Heavenly abode. May God in his Mercy enable us to join her in eternal praise to our Lord & Saviour. Let us humbly bow ourselves before Him & offer perpetual prayer for pardon & forgiveness!

But we Cannot indulge in grief however mournful yet pleasing. Our Country demands all our thoughts, all our energies. To resist the powerful Combination now forming against us, will require every man at his place. If victorious we have everything to hope for in the future. If defeated nothing will be left us to live for. I have not heard what action has been taken by the Dept in reference to my recommendations Concerning the organization of the Cav. But we have no time to wait & you had better join your brigade. This week will in all probability bring us active work & we must strike fast & strong. My whole trust is in God, & I am ready for whatever he may ordain. May he guide guard & Strengthen us is my Constant prayer!

Your devoted father

R E Lee
Despite his frustrations with previous commanders and continuing heavy casualties under General Ulysses S. Grant, Lincoln came to see that Grant’s overall strategy was the right one to win the war. In this telegram written in the early hours of the morning after a typical long night vetting incoming reports, Lincoln for the first time expresses his confidence in Grant’s strategic vision.
Lincoln was not the only one to recognize General Grant’s determination and tenacity in pursuing and defeating the enemy. This political cartoon depicting Grant as a bull dog (at right) skewers not only Confederate military and political leaders (in the doghouse), but also the hesitant General George B. McClellan (at left), who was running against Abraham Lincoln in the election of 1864.
Diary of William P. Woodlin, 8th US Colored Troops, entries from September 28–October 4, 1864. (GLC06599)
A Black Soldier’s Civil War Diary, 1864

These pages describing the bravery of black troops in the siege of Petersburg, Virginia, appear in the manuscript diary of William P. Woodlin, an African American soldier in the 8th US Colored Troops. Woodlin’s diary, which spans November 1863 to October 1864, is believed to be a unique example of a diary written by an African American Civil War soldier. The final page in the diary suggests that he sent the diary home after a year for safekeeping and was about to begin writing in a new book—a volume that has never been found.

[Sept.] 28th We had guard mount as usual this morning & then Rec’d marching orders at 3 P.M. When the whole Corps were moved down towards the pontoon Bridge with the supposition that we were going to Bermuda Hundred, we crossed at Broad way landing but went to Deep Bottom where we arrived between one & two A.M., lay down until 4 when we made coffee 29th & left our knapsacks & got under way, when we soon got under fire in the same old place, but they were driven-out by the 18th Corps & the first line of trenches were carried; we continued to advance until 3 PM when we came to the 4th line on the New Market road where our brigade made a charge one at a time but they were repulsed, our Regt leaving 65 men in all the 7th lost three whole Cos. captured. We held our position that night but the johnnies made a furious attack on the 30th three times but were repulsed with great loss; by the colored troops of the 10th & 18th Corps which there formed a junction. there was a tremendous fire of shells, grape & canister and the like loss about 10 wounded in our Regt. things quiet with the exception of the sharpshooters.

Oct 1st Very rainy, but a heavy attack expected it was delayed for some reason or other, though the Rear continued to shell our lines, a piece coming clear to the Hospital a goodly No of prisoners were taken on Friday of the 8th Carolina.

2d The Regt was engaged in fatigue work all day no firing near us heavy on the extreme left & a little on the right a few prisoners taken.

Oct 3d Still engaged in fatigue, tore an old house down last night I got some of the boards this morning & a little mail.

4th went to the rear to wash & clean up . . .

. . . I draw my passing notes to a close after a years pleasant companionship in jotting down these passing thoughts hoping that this veteran of 5 battles may have an honored place among the scarred relicts of this present war. I will consign it to Northern hands; from whom I shall expect that it will be kept for a memorial for coming years; of him who has carried it so long on the tented field and along 2/3 of the Atlantic Coast 100 miles, up the St Johns River, & 90 up the James, one more journey and thy travels will be ore.

Adieu

Wm. P. Woodlin
Thirty-first Congress

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, that the following article be proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, viz.,

Article X.

All persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people thereof excluded from participation in the political processes thereof, shall be free. And the Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

In the Senate, April 8, 1864.

Abraham Lincoln

Souvenir copy of the Thirteenth Amendment resolution signed by Congress and President Lincoln, February 1, 1865. (GLC00263)
The Thirteenth Amendment, 1865

This copy of the Thirteenth Amendment ending slavery was signed by most of the members of Congress who voted for the resolution as well as by Abraham Lincoln. A constitutional amendment resolution does not require the president’s signature, but by putting his name on it, Lincoln demonstrated how important the end of slavery was to his vision of the United States. The signatures of 37 Senators and 111 Congressmen range from S. C. Pomeroy (Kansas) at top left to Robert C. Schenck (Ohio) at bottom right.

Thirty-Eighth Congress
of the United States of America, at the second session, begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday the fifth day of December one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four.

A Resolution
submitting to the legislatures of the several states a proposition to amend the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, (two-thirds of both Houses concurring,) That the following Article be proposed to the legislatures of the several states as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States which, when ratified by three-fourths of said legislatures shall be valid to all intents and purposes, as a part of the said Constitution, namely:

Article XIII.

Sec. 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Sec. 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

I certify that this Resolution originated in the Senate
J. W. Forney, Secretary

I certify that this Resolution Schuyler Colfax Speaker of the House of Representatives
H. Hamlin. Vice-President of the United States and

Attest E McPherson
Clerk of the House of Representatives

Approved February 1. A.D. 1865. Abraham Lincoln

In the Senate April 8. 1864.

[signatures of Senators]

In the House of Representatives January 31. 1865.

[signatures of Representatives]
Most of the lecturers who came here like it very much. It seems a great improvement to hear the best speakers — so many great thinkers — come at the same time. It has been a great pleasure to do this. I think there will be a great theatre in many years. There is a "Women's Right Union." If you may believe we talk large things.

Many are in favor of direct reformers, & direct right at home; some beginning to feel that they shall go on without some. The Union are going to send representatives to the Women's Right Convention in May. May 10th is often correspondence with Mrs. Stanton. Mrs. Stone says we are discussing the right of suffrage in common. But may you don't care to nurse this, I will give it to business.

Prices especially in goods have gone up. Many provisions have been raised last fall. High as ever. One village lot is $150, & getting improved ready to plant brings it to 200. I think you will mean but one lot, unless, as I did, you take a corner, hoping to sell the corner part for a store. Buildings are high as ever. Has several lately men who wish lumber, goods, etc. together. But the building have a way of getting so cheap as a year ago. They make it out a little of what they want, and it is a dealer in Canada. He sends it down to. The freight is not great.

My first tenant is a builder. I think, almost as easy, I just talked with him. He says the best way for you would be to have a builder by the day, have him get your material, & the order in, get it if necessary, & do the job. You'll tell you that had to me the best way for you if you really made the same (which I have done) come right along. Try to get your lumber ready as much as possible. I have a man at home, & have all, & I think it will come to the State Convention May 4th. If you get to engage you have to have lumber ready in a little time. We work all out pack up, and in twenty-one days. I have nothing in rent, & mean to keep it this way. Have a man, I have as many as possible. Everything seems to be taking for the last year. Doing current accounts to go out on. Things are going just as they were. It has been a busy year. I hope you have a good one.
The Resurgence of the Women’s Rights Movement, 1866

In this letter to her sister, Mary Tillotson of New Jersey combines news of her own activities in raising and selling produce with commentary on the “woman’s right union” she belongs to. The fight for women’s suffrage, begun in earnest with the convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, had diminished as women focused on the abolition of slavery and the Civil War, but the ideas had not died. During the Civil War, many women took greater control of their families’ livelihood and participated in more public activities.


Dear Sister,

Yours came last eve, & I conclude if you resolve to come here to spend next winter you ought to know it soon, hence will write me. Am very glad to hear from you—had been wondering if I must write you again & tell you so. Tho’ I visit you in spirit—& often seem to know just how it is with you & all the rest of our folks, my seemings are not quite clear enough to answer for all communications. . . . You’d be surprised to look at my place & know that it was bought wild last Oct. Should not think of asking less than 2000 for it. The settlement is going on fast as ever, & [illegible] generally hoping for permanent prosperity: but some come with little means, manage poorly, & get discouraged. If I had bought when I first came, should have saved, or made, hundreds. Most of the lecturers who come here, like it so well, that they settle no end to reformers—the best speakers—& so many good entertainments, (something every night) that I cant go to a tenth of them. I think there will be a good theatre ere many years. We’ve a “woman’s right union” & you may believe we talk large things. Very many are in principle dress reformers, & dress right at home, & are beginning to feel that they shall go out in it soon. The Union are going to send representatives to the Womans Right Convention in N.Y. May 10th, & open correspondence with Mrs. Stanton, Lucy Stone &c We are discussing the right of suffrage in earnest. But maybe you dont care to hear this, & Ill turn to business. Prices, especially dry goods have fallen much, provisions none to mention. Rent high as ever. One village lot is $150, & getting improved ready to plant brings it to 200. I think you will want but one lot, unless, as I did, you take a corner, hoping to sell the corner part for a store. . . . Now I’ll tell you what looks to me the best way for you, if you really wish to come (which looks clear-) come right along in May (& I guess Edwin & Anne will come to the state convention, May 24th) & buy your lot, engage your builder to have a house ready in the fall; then, go back, sell out, pack up, & come in to your own place, & spend nothing in rent. Meanwhile draw the plan of house, & know what you want, near as possible. During summer dry fruit to bring for the first year, & bring currant sprouts to set out, & other things, grape cuttings, & berries for instance. Bring what you want; as to furniture, you can see, when coming first whether tis best to bring much.
Postwar Amendments Support Civil Rights for African Americans, 1870

The passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments gave constitutional status to emancipation’s promise of freedom. This lithograph depicts African Americans’ hopes for their future under freedom: the right to education, a stable family life, jobs, and the vote. Surrounding the scene of celebration in Washington, DC, are portraits of Frederick Douglass, John Brown, and Abraham Lincoln.

Frederick Douglass's tribute to Abraham Lincoln, 1880. (GLC09091)
Frederick Douglass Honors Lincoln, 1880

Over the course of the Civil War, and despite initial differences, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln forged a relationship based on a shared vision. Fifteen years after Lincoln’s death, Douglass describes him as “one of the noblest wisest and best men I ever knew.” This stirring tribute to Lincoln was later published in Osborn H. Oldroyd’s *The Lincoln Memorial: Album-Immortelles* (1883).

A great man: Tender of heart, strong of nerve, of boundless patience and broadest sympathies, with no motive apart from his country. He could receive counsel from a child and give counsel to a sage. The simple could approached him with ease, and the learned approached him with deference. Take him for all in all Abraham Lincoln was one of the noblest wisest and best men I ever knew.

Fredk. Douglass

1880

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Frederick Douglass, ca. 1880. (GLC07926.02)
The one purpose of my life has been the establishment of perfect equality of rights for women—civil and political—industrial and educational. We have attained equal chances in nearly all of the college's ministries—equal chances to work—but not equal pay—we have school suffrage in half the states, taxpayers' suffrage in a half-dozen states—Missouri, suffrage in one state—Kansas—and full suffrage in four—Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho—and hope and work in faith to the end.

In good cheer

Susan B. Anthony

Nov. 7, 1901.
Susan B. Anthony Reflects on Women’s Rights, 1901

Writing at the age of eighty, having just retired from a long public life as an advocate for abolition and women’s rights, Susan B. Anthony trenchantly summarizes the gains that have been made in women’s rights. Her energetic tone suggests the inner resilience that had carried her so far and would propel the movement far into the twentieth century.

The one purpose of my life has been the establishment of perfect Equality of rights for women – civil and political – industrial and educational – We have attained equal chances in nearly all of the colleges & universities – equal chances to work – but not equal pay – we have school suffrage in half the states, taxpayers’ suffrage in a half-dozen states – Municipal suffrage in one state – Kansas – and full suffrage in four – Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho – and hope and work in faith till the end.

In good cheer

Susan B. Anthony

Nov. 7. 1901 – Rochester, N.Y.
Begun in the 1840s, the political struggle to grant women suffrage built up through the late nineteenth century as more and more western territories allowed women to vote. Wyoming became the first state to allow women full suffrage when it joined the union in 1890. This poster, published in New York circa 1915, was part of the effort to gain suffrage on a state-by-state basis in advance of the national push for the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.
This World War I poster urges recent European immigrants to conserve food that could feed American and other Allied troops and, eventually, refugees in Europe. It also appeals to their affinity for their new country and gives them a useful way on the home front to support the war effort. It was printed in different languages, including Yiddish, Italian, and Lithuanian, to reach the widest possible audience. Published by the United States Food Administration, 1917.
The Great Depression and the New Deal, 1936

Campaign poster for the presidential election of 1936, Democratic National Campaign Committee. (GLC09532.08)

This Democratic Party campaign poster from 1936 outlines some of the agencies and regulations President Franklin Roosevelt put in place to try to solve the most urgent problems of the Great Depression and suggests why workers should vote to keep Roosevelt in office. The “printer’s bug” in the lower left indicates that the poster was printed by a union shop.
The mobilization of men and women for the war effort inevitably brought racial issues to the fore. In June 1941, Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which prevented discriminatory hiring practices among government contractors. In this letter, FDR signals his disapproval of discrimination against African Americans in all defense contracts, including with the merchant marine.

The White House
Washington

January 14, 1942

Mr. Joseph Curran, President
National Maritime Union
346 West 17th Street
New York, N. Y.

My dear Mr. Curran:

I am informed that the discrimination against colored seamen, referred to in your telegram of January 2nd, was eliminated by the action of the United States Maritime Commission on the day it occurred.

It is the policy of the Government of the United States to encourage full participation in the National Defense program by all citizens, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders.

The policy was stated in my Executive Order signed on June 25, 1941. The order instructed all parties making contracts with the Government of the United States to include in all defense contracts thereafter a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against any worker because of race, creed, color or national origin.

Questions of race, creed and color have no place in determining who are to man our ships. The sole qualifications for a worker in the maritime industry, as well as in any other industry, should be his loyalty and his professional or technical ability and training.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Franklin D. Roosevelt to Joseph Curran, January 14, 1942. (GLCO6686)
On May 10, 1933, the Nazi German Student Association instigated book burnings across Germany to eradicate “the Un-German Spirit.” Ten years later, the US government engaged American support for World War II by reminding citizens what they were fighting against—and what they were fighting for.
Before he became world-renowned as Dr. Seuss for his children’s books and illustrations, Theodor Geisel worked for the US government during World War II designing posters such as this one, encouraging patriotism and investment.
What the hell are we in this for?
Well—now—Regulations prohibit atrocity stories in mail but for unmitigated brutality—barbarism—cruelty— the Japanese take the grand prize—Every time we enter a town the Filipinos turn out with tears of joy and a great shout of "Mabuhay!" mean of Long Life! They won't let you do anything for yourself—They'll stand up and shout "Victory!" with the accompanying V of the fingers in by word—Sometimes I see an old man who still doesn't comprehend that there's been a change—Stelle, I'd choke with fury when he'd take off his hat and bow down—as they were.
A Soldier on the War in the Pacific, 1945

Witnessing the brutality of war and atrocities against civilians could overwhelm the most fair-minded of men. Sidney Diamond, an officer in the 82nd Chemical Battalion, wrote loving, humorous, and hopeful letters to his fiancée almost every day throughout his time in the army. He was sent to the South Pacific in June 1943 and received a Silver Star and commendations for courage. In this letter, he expresses his reactions to the horrors he witnessed as US forces pushed the Japanese out of the Philippines. On January 29, 1945, Diamond was killed by a Japanese mortar during an assault on Fort Stotsenburg, north of Manila.

Please note: This document contains language that is offensive to us today. However, it was in common use during World War II when Japan was the enemy.

21 Jan 1945

Darling —

Again – a short note – we've been moving so fast, so often, so far — that we just can't squeeze in mail. I'm writing this in the courtyard of some large Filipino commercial house — — They say we'll stop for two hours — so – a letter to you — a little rest for me. There are so many things to say — so many new sights, customs, terrain, emotions — that this little postcard can scarce do justice —

There is one point though, that I'd like to bring out — Perhaps you'll understand —

Sometimes, while stepping away in the jungles there arose the great big

“What the hell am I in this for” — well — I know now — Regulations prohibit atrocity stories in mail but for unmitigated brutality — barbarism — cruelty — the Japanese take the grand prize — Every time we enter a town the Filipinos turn out with tears of joy and a great shout of “Maboohai” which means — “Long Life,” Good Luck or something — If [illegible strikeout] They won't let you do a thing for yourself — They'll assist in digging holes and unloading troops — “Victory” with the accompanying V of the fingers is by word—

Sometimes [illegible strikeout] I'd pass an old man who still didn't comprehend that there'd been a change — Stelle I'd choke with fury when he'd take off his hat and bow down — as they were forced to do towards Nip officers & men — or when I'd give a kid a piece of candy and ask him his name — he'd reply “Hai” which is Nip for “Yes sir” —

So far we've been with the foward elements and on many occasions have been the first American troops into a village — [illegible strikeout] “Guerillias” would meet us — then people would come with food — and happy smiles —

Emotions are difficult to transcribe on paper but I'm glad I'm here — I'm glad we've helped these people and hope we can drive the enemy out of the Philippines quickly —

My thoughts are with you constantly — Sometimes I welcome night — so that I can stretch out on my back — feel around for a comfortable position in my hole then look at the stars and think of home and you — I also cuss my feet for burning — — we walk & walk — then ride —

No trouble so far — I think I'll be okay —

I love you — love you — love you —

Your —

Sid
John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, 1961

A World War II veteran, John F. Kennedy was the youngest man ever elected president and the first Roman Catholic. In his Inaugural Address, Kennedy challenges a “new generation” of Americans to “ask not what your country can do for you: Ask what you can do for your country.”
The Women’s Liberation Movement

In 1970, disparate branches of the women’s liberation movement worked together to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment with the Women’s Strike for Equality. In more than ninety cities across the country women and men participated in marches, demonstrations, sit-ins, teach-ins, and other events. Demonstrations like this march staged in Washington, DC, brought attention to the economic, political, and educational inequality women experienced.
Abolitionist Campaign Token, 1838

Beginning with Josiah Wedgwood in England in the 1780s, abolitionists had distributed images of enslaved Africans under the motto “Am I Not a Man and a Brother” as part of their anti-slavery campaigns. This token, which was issued in the United States in 1838, incorporated the motto as part of the escalating abolitionist movement in the decades leading up to the Civil War. The question evolved during the Civil Rights Movement into the powerful statement on the opposite page: “I AM A MAN.”
On April 3, 1968, the day before he was assassinated, Martin Luther King Jr. traveled to Memphis to lead a rally of sanitation workers striking for equitable wages. The strikers carried these placards inscribed “I AM A MAN,” echoing the famous anti-slavery slogan, “Am I Not a Man and a Brother,” shown on the opposite page.
Edward M. Kennedy on Vietnam Veterans, 1973

Less than a month after the last US troops were withdrawn from Vietnam, Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts responded to a letter about the treatment of veterans and conscientious objectors. Kennedy focuses on “reconciliation and healing” and notes that the “immediate task is to care for the addict, the jobless and the wounded veterans . . . [to] insure that they are given every opportunity to rebuild their lives.”
Ronald Reagan and the Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989

Two years after Ronald Reagan demanded, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall” in a speech on June 12, 1987, the Berlin Wall did indeed come down, uniting East and West Germany and signaling the demise of the Soviet government, its hold over member nations, and the Cold War waged between East and West since World War II.
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that promotes excellence in the teaching and learning of American history. Founded in 1994 by philanthropists Richard Gilder and Lewis E. Lehrman, the Institute is today a leader in the fields of both American history and K–12 education. Gilder Lehrman has a twenty-year track record of providing teacher training and classroom resources that draw on a roster of eminent historians and a collection of more than 60,000 primary source documents. Each year, the Institute offers support and resources to thousands of teachers from public, private, and parochial schools and, through them, reaches hundreds of thousands of students who learn about American history in a way that is engaging and memorable and promotes lifelong skills. Gilder Lehrman has been recognized with awards from the White House, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Organization of American Historians.

Among its resources and programs are:

- The website “Home for History” at www.gilderlehrman.org, which provides essays and video lectures by eminent historians; featured primary sources with images, transcripts, and historical introductions; interactive features; and many other resources
- The Affiliate School Program, which provides schools in the network with free access to resources and programs, including exclusive eligibility to apply to the Gilder Lehrman Teacher Seminars
- Teaching Literacy through History (TLTH), a professional development program that trains educators to deliver rigorous instruction that develops students’ reading, writing, and analytical skills emphasized by the Common Core
- Teacher Seminars on different topics in American history led by eminent historians and master teachers to help educators build content knowledge and develop classroom strategies
- Traveling Exhibitions on a wide variety of topics in American history that are loaned to schools, libraries, and other community centers
- Student essay competitions, including the Dear George Washington Contest for elementary school students and the Civil War Essay Contest for middle and high school students
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To learn more about the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, please visit

www.gilderlehrman.org

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**Back cover image:**

Abolitionist Flag, 1859

Created by John Brown’s abolitionist supporters in 1859, this unique flag depicts only the stars and stripes of free states. (GLC05762)