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*From the Battlefields of the Civil War to the Homesteads of Nebraska:
The Turbulent Lives of the Durkee Family (1862-1895)*

Shelfmark

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

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War Memorabilia Collection.

Durkee/Blackden Correspondence.

February 9, 1862, to August 26, 1895.

Eleven items (numbered 1 to 11 below).

Introduction

The eleven items edited here, dating from the early 1860s to the mid-1890s, belong to the “Durkee Correspondence” of the “War Memorabilia Collection.” In 1973, they were donated by Ms. Florence Durkee of Brea, California, to the University Archives, and Special Collections at California State University, Fullerton. Despite their age of well over 100 years, the items are in fairly good condition, and most of the writing is legible. Ink color, penmanship, and the linguistic level of the contents vary based on the items’ respective authors.

The items include Civil-War-era correspondence, namely two letters from Joseph Durkee of Leeds, Wisconsin, who had enlisted in the Union Army, to his wife Edna (Items 1 and 2, dating to 1862); three letters from Joseph’s brother James to their mother, Mrs. M. R. Durkee (Items 3, 4, and 7, dating to 1862, 1863, and 1865, and written from Virginia and Mississippi); a letter from their mother to James (Item 5, dating to 1864); and a letter from a Union Army official to their mother (Item 6, dating to 1865). Then there is James Durkee’s 1868/1869 bill of debt and credit for building materials in Iowa (Item 8); an 1873 letter from James Durkee (Nebraska) to his brother Harvey (Item 9); an 1895 letter from a Mrs. A. S. Faville to Mrs. J. E. Durkee (Iowa), presumably a family member of the subsequent generation; and an undated envelope addressed to Mrs. M. R. Durkee (Item 11).

The items in this collection start with Joseph Durkee writing to his wife Edna, hoping for a quick end to the Civil War and wondering whether she has been able to receive financial help (Items 1 and 2). Shortly thereafter, Joseph’s brother James has to inform their mother that Joseph has been killed (Item 3). In another letter to his mother, James speaks of the harsh Southern summer, the horrible road conditions, and the death of hundreds of soldiers due to these circumstances (Item 4). When James becomes a prisoner-of-war, his mother writes to him, hoping he is being treated well (Item 5). At this point, we temporarily switch from the perspective of the Durkee family to that of a Union Army official, Ely Samuel Parker, who is informing Mother Durkee about the delay in the prisoner exchange

for her son James (Item 6). Shortly thereafter, we hear from James about his release and upcoming discharge from the Union Army (Item 7). By 1868, James is in Iowa, as evidenced by a bill of debt and credit for building materials addressed to him (Item 8). In 1873, James writes to his brother Harvey, seeking monetary aid for his financial struggles, caused largely by the brutal Nebraska winter (Item 9). An 1895 letter from a Mrs. A. S. Faville reveals that a Mrs. J. E. Durkee has lost her baby son (Item 10). The final piece of this collection is the undated envelope addressed to Mrs. M. R. Durkee (Item 11).

The items edited here should be of interest to those studying nineteenth-century American history with a focus on the Civil War and the Western expansion of the subsequent decades. From the vantage point of one Midwestern family, they provide insight into the war-torn nation of the 1860s, referencing high-ranking officers of the Union Army, notable battles, and a prisoner-of-war camp that anyone studying Civil War history will recognize. The items reflect the realities of the Homestead Act and the evolving social, political, and economic landscape in the years following the war. The personal touches in the correspondence between family members, friends, and military high command provide a unique perspective on the events of nineteenth-century America.

The transcriptions below preserve the lines, spelling, and capitalization of the original letters. Any additions are enclosed by square brackets. Loss and illegible deletions are indicated by three dots enclosed by square brackets.

Edition: Item 1, Letter, Joseph Durkee to his wife (Edna Durkee), February 9, 1862, "Brigate" Hospital, Washington, D.C.

Front, right side:

Brigate Hospitle
 Washington, Febuary 9^{th1} 1862
 Dear Edna² I supose you wonder why
 I do not write well the reason is I have been
 very sick I was taken with a severe fever on
 my longues³ it was difacult for me to
 breath I was taken to the camp hospitel at
 first and then the Docter ordered me to be
 taken to town to the Brigade hospitel whare
 I an [*sic*] now, I am geting well fast wich you
 will no by my siting up to write to you
 I have exclent care here every thing I can ask
 for and wa[i]ters to atend me, you would think
 to see me I was some grate lord, I have a splendid

¹ Corrected from "8th."

² Joseph Durkee's wife.

³ Lungs.

room with a stove in it and a rick⁴ to sleep on with good wolen sheets and a long white night gown and white coten flanel drowers and a pair of cloth shoes to slip on when I want to get up and then I have a wash dish and soap and a fine linen towel in fact every thing I kneed I have all the writing paper and envelopes I want and clean cloth to put on evry sunday I could not fare better if I was to home

Brigate Hospitale
 Washington, February 9th 1862
 Dear Edna I suppose you wonder why I do not write well the reason is I have been very sick I was taken with a severe fever on my longus it was difacult for me to breath I was taken to the camp hospitel at first and then the Docter ordered me to be taken to town to the Brigate hospitel where I am now, I am getting well fast with you will see by my sitting up to write to you I have exelent care here every thing I can ask for and water to attend me, you would think to see me I was some gote lord, I have a splendid room with a stove in it and a rick to sleep on with good wolen sheets and a long white night gown and white coten flanel drowers and a pair of cloth shoes to slip on when I want to get up and then I have a wash dish and soap and a fine linen towel in fact every thing I kneed I have all the writing paper and envelopes I want

Figure 1: Letter, Joseph Durkee to his wife (Edna Durkee), February 9, 1862, "Brigate" Hospital, Washington, D.C. [Item 1, front, right side, top, excerpt].

⁴ A constructed stack of straw.

Back, left side:

thar is a married woman liveing here
 sees that we want for nothing she combs
 our hair and cuts it and trims our wiskers
 and digs the dander and dust up from our
 scalps and oils our hair and makes us
 look like gentleman soldiers she feches us
 books and pamphlets to read and see feches
 us preservs and nice jelley in fact every thing
 a sick soldier could want I understand that
 this woman is hired by the covement⁵ and
 is furnished these thing by the soldier relief
 association, I think I shall be able to go
 back to camp in about a week I received a
 letter from you last night I was up in
 the midle of the night I could not sleep
 and so I set up and the wa[i]ter came and
 handed me a letter wich was very aceptable
 you wrot that James⁶ wrote thay had no
 playing cards in their tent and that it
 was only tent on the ground but what did
 James prob[ab]ly did not think when he wrote
 of our tent and and [sic] an other tent below
 us thay do not play cards

Back, right side:

that has never been but one game of
 cards plyed in our tent, and the way it
 hapened was this one of the vermont boys came
 in and brought in a pack of cards and
 wanted to play a gaim cald the high jack
 he played [...] abou tenn minuts and
 and some of them said the vote was
 that thare should be no playing of
 cards in the tent and he put them
 up this was the first and prob[ab]ly will
 be the last you kneed not borrow any
 trouble about me paying [sic] cards for
 I wont have a pack in the tent if I
 know it will keep my word and I hope

⁵ Government.

⁶ Joesph Durkee's brother.

you will not borrow any more trouble about
 it Edna we prob[ab]ly will have our arms soon
 the second Regiment has got theirs and
 we are to have ours the twent[i]eth of this month
 so we shall not be disbanded Edna I wrot
 to you in my last [letter] if you had seed wheat
 enough to go in the spring you did not
 tell me any thing about it in your last [letter]
 I want you should be sure and let me know

Front, left side:

in your next letter I want to know how
 much wheat is worth a bushel you
 write in your next [letter]. Edna it will
 soon be pay day again and
 perhaps I may go home them [sic] our
 pay is due us the first of march
 if I do not go home then I prob[ab]ly
 shall wait untill the first of may
 wich is our next pay day but I
 am a going to aply for a ferlow⁷ this
 next pay day and if I cant get it
 I will wait untill the next
 Edna. I am geting tirrd so I must end
 by wishing you all the hapiness you
 can take hoping that you will remember
 me in your devotions to the creator of of [sic]
 all things trust me Edna that
 I will prove faithful untill the
 end
 from your affectionate Husban
 Joseph Durkee

*Edition: Item 2, Letter, Joseph Durkee to his wife (Edna Durkee),
 March 16, 1862, "Ny" Hospital, Washington, D.C.*

Front, right side:

Ny Hospotle
 Washington March 16th 1862
 Dear Edna I received your letter
 in due time it found me well I
 am gaining in flesh, and feel first

⁷ Furlough: leave of absence.

rate Edna, I have had a good tim
 visating Charles⁸ I have first rate
 times I can do all I have to do in
 two hours and then I go whare I
 am a mind to Charles wants I [s]hould
 go in his reg[i]ment but Conol Berdon⁹
 wont let me go Charles would give
 me a good position, but I cant go
 I found lots of boys I [k]new, I found
 amoung the rest, Butler Ives,¹⁰ and
 several from Malone¹¹ I have good times
 amog the boys talking over old times
 but Charles reg[i]ment is ordered away
 to morrow thay are going down the
 river to reinforse Burnside¹² and the
 second reg[i]ment of sharp shooters is going
 to[o] thay start in the morning
 turn over

Back, left side:

Edna we have not got our arms
 yet so we will have to stay as a
 reserve, the grate army is moveing
 and we shall soon here [*sic*] of the rebelleon
 being crushed out and then we can
 return to our homes in peace Edna
 I wish you could have been here and see
 the army cross the river, thay were crossing
 all day and all night and nearly all
 the next day such sights of soldiers
 it seemed as so thay could whip
 the world, as far as you could look
 you could see a moveing mass a
 wilderness of bay[o]netts and a string
 of cannon that would have reechd

⁸ Unknown individual; perhaps identical with Charlie Powel mentioned below in this letter.

⁹ Colonel Hiram Berdan (1824-1893), Union Army.

¹⁰ Unknown individual; perhaps identical with the Massachusetts-born engineer/surveyor of the same name (1830-1872).

¹¹ Location in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin.

¹² Major General Ambrose Burnside (1824-1881), Union Army.

from our house to Lowville,¹³ you
 may calculate that the rebels will
 ketch [?] it when our forses overtake
 them but thay found it out
 and left but our army is after
 them with hot sticks and if thay
 dont look sharp thay will get
 caught in a trap

Back, right side:

Edna I supose you are out of
 money by what mother wrote to
 Jim,¹⁴ we have not got our pay
 yet and we here [*sic*] that we wont get
 it untill the first of april I hope
 you will get your states pay if you
 cant you can get some gros[er]ies of mr
 Williams¹⁵ at Sun Prairie¹⁶ you must
 manage some way James and I are
 a going to send home fourty dollars
 as quick as we get our pay this will
 make you all right you must pony
 up them Madison fellows¹⁷ and make them
 pay you Edna you must keep up good
 spirits and it wont be long befor I will
 be back and then we will be glad to see
 one each other, you tell Hiram¹⁸ not to sow
 the wheat but to ha[u]ll it to sun prairie
 and sell it and buy some that is clear
 of oats and I will pay him for his trouble
 you get harvey¹⁹ to atend to it and have
 him see that Hiram furnishes good wheat
 I will write Harvey a line and you give
 it to him

¹³ Location in Columbia County, Wisconsin.

¹⁴ Joseph Durkee's brother James.

¹⁵ Unknown individual.

¹⁶ Location in Dane County, Wisconsin.

¹⁷ Probably a reference to the Wisconsin General Assembly.

¹⁸ Unknown individual.

¹⁹ Joseph Durkee's and James Durkee's brother.

Front, left side:

Edna you tell mother that
 I saw Peat Lampron²⁰
 Isa Lamprons boy the on[e]
 thay youst²¹ to call Bull Nevy
 the boys have lots of fun with
 him Mother will remember him
 I also saw Charlie Powel²² and
 albert andrews²³ and andrew miller²⁴
 and lots of others Charles says he saw
 Hatter²⁵ a little while befor he come
 away he said she was as smart as
 a whip Edna you must write
 often and do not borrow any
 trouble about me haveing the
 small pox, thare has only been
 a few cases and thay are prope[b]ly
 taken care of by them selves
 thare is no more simtoms of it
 in camp so I think thar is no
 danger so good by[e] for this time
 from your affectionate Husban
 Joseph, Durkee

*Edition: Item 3, Letter, James Durkee to his mother (Mrs. M. R. Durkee),
 May 2, 1862, Camp, near Yorktown, Virginia*

Front, right side:

Camp near, Yorktown V[irgini]a
 May the 2nd 1862
 Friday
 Dear Mother
 it is with regret that I seat myself
 this morning to write you the sad
 and mournfuly news of the Death
 of Joseph he was shot last night while on

²⁰ Unknown individual.

²¹ Used.

²² Unknown individual.

²³ Unknown individual.

²⁴ Unknown individual.

²⁵ Unknown individual.

Picket²⁶ as near as I can learn he was shot through the head his body is in the hands of the Rebels it is rather hard news but it cant be helped it was his own fault if he had staid in the pit he might have not got shot but about 40 rods²⁷ from the pit was an old shead whare the rebels was and Jo was determined to burn it. I told him not to go thare the last words I said to him was to caution him not to do it nor under take it

ate , Camp, near, Yorktown, Va
 May ^{the 2nd} 1862
 Friday.. Dear Mother
 it is with regret that I seat myself
 this morning to write you the sad
 and mournful news of ^{the} death
 of your son he was shot last ^{night} while on
 Picket as near as I can learn he
 was shot through the head his
 body is in the hands of the Rebels
 it is rather hard news but it cant
 be helped. it was his own fault if
 he had staid in the pit he might
 have not got shot but about 40 rods
 from the pit was an old shead
 whare the rebels was and Jo was
 determined to burn it, I told him

Figure 2: Letter, James Durkee to his mother (Mrs. M. R. Durkee), May 2, 1862, Camp, near Yorktown, Virginia [Item 3, front, right side, top, except].

²⁶ Guard post.

²⁷ 1 rod = 16.5 feet; i.e., approximately 660 feet or 0.125 miles.

Back, left side:

but he was bent on going go
 he would he was about 30 feet from
 it when he was hit the Rebels made
 a charge on them ~~th~~ and the rest
 run and so they took Jo off the
 man that was with him sayes
 he was shot in the head but was
 breathing when he left he tried to
 get him away but they fired a
 volly at him and he left so he is
 gone he is gone he fell in a good
 cause he died a brave . man . but
 [...] he was to venturous I offten told
 him of it but he paid no attention
 to me he would rush himself into
 danger when thare was no use of
 it but he was born to be killed in
 Battle so it cant be helped he was
 liked by all the company and the boys
 all moarn the loss of him he was
 the first to fall out of our Company
 and we hope the time will soon
 come when we shal avenge his

Back, right side:

blood I shal have my revenge if
 [...] ever I get a chance. oh Mother
 this will be solemn news to you
 and Edna it will cause many
 a tear to be shed but our only hope
 is to God who is able to ra[i]se him
 up at the last day then we shal know
 who is wright and who is wrong. I shal
 try and get a pass and go as see
 Charles²⁸ he is a bout 4 miles from
 here. Jo had in his pocket about two
 dollars and some postag stamps and
 a receipt of 35 dollars the²⁹ he and I
 sent by express I supos you have

²⁸ Perhaps Charles Powel, mentioned in Letter 2.

²⁹ That.

got it by this time well mother I
 cant think of much more to
 write my head aches so I cant
 hardly see I will haf to close
 so good by[e] all write soon
 Joseph D was shot Thuresday night
 about 9 o clock on the 1st of May

Front, left side:

To Mother Durkee
 from James Durkee your affectionate
 Son

*Edition: Item 4, Letter, James Durkee to his mother (Mrs. M. R. Durkee),
 June 16, 1863, Camp, near Bull Run, Virginia*

Front, right side:

V[irgini]a
 Camp near Bull Run³⁰
 June 16th 1863
 Dear Mother
 I having a chance
 to send a letter I thought
 I would improve the time
 I am well but feal pretty
 near tired out we have had
 some of the hardest Marches
 that ever was and in the
 hottest weather we left our
 old camp near Falmouth³¹
 on the 11th have been on the
 march ever since, when
 night comes our Co[mpany] has
 no more than 5 or 6 to
 noak [?] a slack [?] of guns
 the weather is so warm that
 the men farley melt right
 down yesterday some 300
 of our men died on acount

³⁰ Location and battle site (1861 and 1862) in Prince William County, Virginia

³¹ Location in Stafford County, Virginia

Back, left side:

of the march I have not
 time to write you all the
 particulars as the Chapl[a]in
 will be here in a few minuts
 to take the mail and I have
 slood³² the tramp brodley [?]
 come up every time but
 some times I could see
 every thing a whirlling
 to day we are in the
 vicinity of Bulls Run
 in the old Br[ea]st. Works³³
 that the Rebels built
 we prob[ab]ly will start on
 to Washington to morrow
 I sent George 6.45 cents
 did he get it yet I will
 send you some soon
 give my respects to
 all write soon I have
 not recived any mail
 in some time I expect
 some as soon as we get

Back, right side:

to Washin[gton]
 well I cant
 think of any more
 so good By[e] for this
 will write more as soon
 as get time
 James Durkee
 to Mother
 Durkee³⁴ Durkee & [...]
 Leeds³⁵ James Durkee
 is hereby respect[-]
 ed to call at the

³² Slowed.

³³ Fortifications.

³⁴ The remaining lines of this letter are in different hands and ink, presumably added later.

³⁵ Location in Columbia County, Wisconsin

in the morning for
 examination Durkee
 you might come home
 Harvey Durkee
 you to[o]
 come home by the morrow
 now will you come home

Front, left side:

James Durkee
 Leeds
 James
 Durkee Durkee
 James Durkee
 Leeds
 George
 [...]
 Mrs. M. R. Durkee
 Leeds
 [...]

*Edition: Item 5, Letter, Mrs. M. R. Durkee to her son (James Durkee),
 August 9, 1864, Leeds, Wisconsin*

Front:

1864
 Leeds August the 9th
 My Dear Son,
 your letter of May the 17th
 came to hand July the 29th and it is with much Joy
 and satisfaction that I seat myself to answer it I was
 extremely glad to hear that you was alive and
 well and treated well allthough A prisenor
 we are all well and so are all your friends and
 may God bless you and all those that treat you well
 with the same blessing
 we are haveing quite A good
 harvist considering the drouth you must be of good cheer
 James for we live in hopes of seeing you again sometime
 your brother Harvey is at Memphis Tenn[essee]
 you must write to us as often as you can

the friends all send there [sic] love to you keep up good
 courage and dont be homesick I must close good by[e]
 from your affectionate mother Mrs M R Durkee
 to James Durkee

1864

Leeds August the 9th

My Dear Son,

your letter of May the 1st
 came to hand July the 29th and it is with much joy
 and satisfaction that I sent myself to answer it I was
 extremely glad to hear that you was alive and
 well and treated well although a prisoner
 we are all well and so are all your friends and
 may God bless you and all those that treat you well
 with the same blessing

we are having quite so good
 harvest considering the drouth you must be of good cheer
 James for live in hopes of seeing you again sometime
 your brother Harvey is at Memphis Tenn

you must write to us as often as you can
 the friends all send there love to you keep up good
 courage and ^{don't} be homesick I must close good by
 from your affectionate mother Mrs M R Durkee

to James Durkee

Figure 3: Letter, Mrs. M. R. Durkee to her son (James Durkee), August 9, 1864, Leeds, Wisconsin [Item 5, front].

Back:

I send ten cents to pay for
 confederate stamp
 James don't you want some money
 shall I send you some write and let me
 know

(Columbia) Henry Huntington³⁶ is wounded and
in Hospital at Washington is getting better well

Head Quarters Armies of the United States,
City Point, Va., Feb. 6 1865.

Mrs. M. R. Durkee, City Point
Madam! Va

I am directed by the Lieutenant General
Commanding, to acknowledge the receipt of
yours of the 28th January 1865; and to say that
every exertion is being made to effect a general
exchange of all prisoners now held North and South.
Owing, however, to the difficulty of moving large
bodies of men in the South, by reason of the bad
condition of the rail roads and other highways,
much delay will be experienced before our prisoners
can reach any place where we can receive them.
Your letter has been referred to Col. J. E. Hullford,
Assistant Agent of Exchange.
Supplies or money packages for prisoners
in the South can be sent directed care of

Figure 4: Letter, E[ly]. S[amuel]. Parker to Mrs. M. R. Durkee, via John J. Johnson, February 6, 1865, Headquarters (U.S. Armies), City Point, Virginia [Item 6, front].

³⁶ Unknown individual.

*Edition: Item 6, Letter, E[ly]. S[amuel]. Parker to Mrs. M. R. Durkee,
via John J. Johnson,
February 6, 1865, Headquarters (U.S. Armies), City Point, Virginia*

Front: [letterhead] Head Quarters Armies of United States,

City Point,³⁷ V[irgini]a., Feb. 6 1865.³⁸

Mrs M. R. Durkee

City Point

Co[mmonwealth of] V[irgini]a

Madam!

I am directed by the Lieutenant General
Commanding,³⁹ to acknowledge the receipt of
yours of the 28th January 1865; and to say that
every exertion is being made to effect a general
exchange of all prisoners now held North and South.
Owing, however, to the difficulty of moving large
bodies of men in the South, by reason of the bad
conditions of the rail roads and other highways,
much delay will be experienced before our prisoners
can reach any place where we can receive them.

Your letter has been refered to Col[onel]. J. E. Mulford,⁴⁰
Assistant Agent of Exchange.

Supplies or money packages for prisoners
in the South can be sent directed care of

over

Back, left side:

Lieutenant Colonel J. E. Mulford Assistant
Agent of Exchange, Fort Monroe, V[irgini]a.

I am, very respectfully

Your ob[e]d[ien]t servant

E. S. Parker⁴¹

L[ieutenan]t. Co[one]l. & Priv[ate]. Sec[retar]y.

J E Mulford⁴²

Fort Monroe

V[irgini]a

³⁷ Location in Prince George County, Virginia.

³⁸ Corrected from "1864" by the writer.

³⁹ Probably General Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885), Union Army, 18th U.S. President (1869-1877).

⁴⁰ John Elmer Mulford.

⁴¹ Colonel Ely Samuel Parker (1828-1895), born as Hasanoanda (Seneca), Union Army.

⁴² Named here as he was copied on Mrs. M. R. Durkee's inquiry.

Back, right side:

John T. Johnson⁴³
Chicago
Box 7496 Illinois

*Edition: Item 7, Letter, James Durkee to his mother (Mrs. M. R. Durkee),
April 1, 1865, Camp Fisk, near Vicksburg, Mississippi*

Front, right side:

1865
Camp Fisk,⁴⁴ Vicksburg⁴⁵ April 1st
Dear Mother
I wonce more find
myself seated in our own
lines a writing you a few lines
to let you know that, I am
yet a live and well and in
the land of the living
We left Andersonvill[e]⁴⁶ G[eorgi]a on
the 24th of March Arived in our
lines on the last day of the
Month we had a very teagous⁴⁷
journy had to march from
Jackson⁴⁸ to the Big Black
river⁴⁹ which was 3 days
marching Mother the last
day of March was the happiest
day of my life and one
that I shall never forget
We are here now in Camp

Back, left side:

Parolle⁵⁰ how long we shall
stope I cannot say But as
soon as I get my discharge I

⁴³ Presumably this letter was sent to Mrs. M. R. Durkee via Mr. Johnson.

⁴⁴ Union Army camp in Warren County, Mississippi

⁴⁵ Location in Warren County, Mississippi.

⁴⁶ Confederate Army prisoner-of-war camp in Sumter County, Georgia.

⁴⁷ Phonetic spelling of "tedious."

⁴⁸ Location in Hinds County, Mississippi

⁴⁹ A tributary to the Mississippi River.

⁵⁰ Early prisoner release.

will soon be with you all
 again which I hope will be
 soon I have Suffired a great
 deal since I was captured
 some times I thought I never
 would see home again But
 the good Lord saw fit to
 keep up untill I have been
 Exchanged for which I am
 very thankfall [*sic*]
 I received you[r] very welcome letter
 of the 9th of August which
 gave me great pleasure to hear
 from you all
 Write as soon as you
 get this and let me know
 how you have got along
 since my long absence let
 me know if Harvey is
 in Memphis T[e]n[nessee] yet and

Back, right side:

where I will find him if we
 Stope on our way up the
 River I have not drawed any
 new clothes yet – but – expect to
 soon am in nead of them
 very much my helth is
 pretty good considering but
 not as it use to be in '63⁵¹
 We are treated very kindley here
 are getting pleanty to eat
 which is something we have not
 had in 11 Monthes
 Well Mother I cannot tell
 you how our poor soldiers
 have Suffered so I will not
 attempt to try in this [letter]
 Onley upwards of 14,000 have
 Died for want of proper diet
 thousands have Starved to death

⁵¹ 1863.

I cannot think of much to
write now so I will bring
this to a close give my
love to all and write

Front, left side:

me all the News
tell [...]I will b[e]
home before long and
Some thing good to eat
will haf to come or I will
make War
no more att Present
I am as ever
your affectionate son
James Durkee
PS did you receive the
last money I sent you
last Spring \$20
A draft to Camp Fisk
Co G 4th Battallion
Vicksburg Miss[issippi]

*Edition: Item 8, List of Building Materials Sold/Bill of Debt and Credit,
James Durkee to C. W. Rogers, per E. Higbey,
September 24, 1868, Charles City, Iowa, to July 9, 1869, Chetopa, Kansas*

Front: [Ditto marks ["] have been replaced by content in square brackets.]

Charles City⁵² Sept[ember] 24th 1868

J[ames]. Durkee In a/c ⁵³ with C. W. Rogers & Co.		D ⁵⁴
To 130 ft Dressed Pine Boards @ \$60 in	7.80	
[To] 76 [ft] 1¼ inch [Pine] Plank \$70	5.32	
[To] 76 [ft] 2x8 [Pine] Scantling \$35	2.66	15.78
Oct 27 [To] 1 in/11 2x8 [Pine] Shingles \$6 ½		6.50
Nov 14 [To] 400 ft [Pine] Flooring \$55 in	22.00	
[Nov 14] [To] 46 [ft] 1¼ [Pine] Plank 70	3.22	
[Nov 14] [To] 14 [ft] [Pine] Common B[oar]ds 30	.42	25.64
[Nov] 26 [To] 32 [ft] ½ [Pine] Boards 40		1.28
[Nov] 26 [To] 9 P [Pine] Bottens 15		1.35
Dec 2 [To] 47 ft [Pine] clear B[oar]ds 60	2.82	

⁵² Location in Floyd County, Iowa.

⁵³ Account current.

⁵⁴ Presumably "Debt."

[Dec 2]	[To]	52 ft [Pine] 2 nd clear B[oar]ds 40	2.08	
[Dec 2]	[To]	4/10 in [Pine] Soth [?] 5	<u>2.00</u>	6.90
[Dec] 7	[To]	1 6/10 in [Pine] Soth [?] 5	8.00	
[Dec 7]	[To]	66 ft [Pine] 2/4 Scantling 32	<u>2.11</u>	10.11
[Dec] 11	[To]	89 P 712 ft [Pine] 2/4 [Scantling] = 12		
	[To]	15 [P] 140 [ft] [Pine] 2/4 [Scantling] =14		
	[To]	4 [P] 64 [ft] [Pine] 4/4 [Scantling] =12		
	[To]	16 [P] 256 [ft] [Pine] 2/8 [Scantling] =12		
	[To]	18 [P] <u>288 [ft]</u> [Pine] 2/6 [Scantling] =16		
	[To]	1460 fta 32	46.72	
	[To]	550 [ft] [Pine] Sheeting 30	16.50	
	[To]	3½ in [Pine] Shingles 6	21.00	
	[To]	180 [ft] [Pine] Stock B[oar]ds 36	6.48	
	[To]	60 [ft] [Pine] Clear B[oar]ds 60	3.60	
	[To]	779 [ft] [Pine] Siding 35	27.26	
	[To]	50 [ft] [Pine] Com[mon] B[oar]ds 30	<u>1.50</u>	123.06
[Dec?] 17	[To]	472 [ft] [Pine] Flooring 45		21.24
		for[war]d		<u> </u>

Back, left side: [Additional, apparently unrelated numbers, written in pencil, are omitted here.]

Amt of dept for[war]d \$211.86

Contra Credit

1868

Oct 10	By cash	4.00
[Oct] 19	[By cash]	18.00
[Oct] 24	[By cash]	15.00
Nov 5	[By cash]	15.00
[Nov] 9	[By cash]	20.00
[Nov] 26	[By cash]	20.00
Dec 14	[By cash]	15.00

1869

Feb 11	Cash by a neighbor		
	as per Rec[eip]t Del[i]v[ered]	<u>35.00</u>	<u>142.00</u>
	Balance due		\$69.86

C.W. Rogers & Co

Per E. Higbey

This bill of Debt & credit is correct as the entries stand on the books and I believe them to be true showing a full and impartial a/c of all the account of C. W. Rogers & Co with J Durkee

E. H.⁵⁵

Dated Chetopa⁵⁶ Kansas July 9th, 1869

Back, right side:

J. Durkee Bill

Bal[ance] \$69.86

*Edition: Item 9, Letter, James Durkee to his brother (Harvey Durkee),
December 6, 1873, Hastings, Nebraska*

Front, right side:

Hastings Neb[raska]⁵⁷

December 6th / 73⁵⁸

Brother Harvey

Your Letter

I received some time since
But have delayed in answering
I have not done very much
for the past two weeks hardly
made enough to pay my board
and not enough to pay postage
We are having considerable
winter weather at present
snowing all the time since
yesterday.

I received a letter
from Mother with 2 doll[ars]
in G. B⁵⁹ – and one from
Henry Church⁶⁰ with \$5.00 it
comes just in the nick of

Back, left side:

time to make out my
Homestead papers⁶¹ I wish
you could send me some
untill I can get to work
again. I have the promise

⁵⁵ E. Higbey.

⁵⁶ Location in Labette County, Kansas.

⁵⁷ Location in Adams County, Nebraska.

⁵⁸ 1873.

⁵⁹ Possibly "Green Backs," a slang term for paper dollar bills.

⁶⁰ Unknown individual.

⁶¹ Documents certifying the ownership of land.

of some good Jobs before
 long then can pay you
 back. You want to be
 sure and be here in side
 of six months with your
 \$20.00 or you will loose your
 claim and also your right
 yours is a very good claim
 and is situated about
 six miles North of Hastings
 and there is a Railroad
 surviyed from here to Grand
 I[s]land⁶² which passes one
 corner of yours and just
 about where the Station
 will be be built The People
 of Hall Co and Grand
 I[s]land voted on the 4th

Back, right side:

wether they would raise
 the \$90,000 bonds to build
 the road or not. And I have
 not learned ~~wither~~ how it
 has gone. I think you can
 make a good start out of
 your site if you attend to it
 It is just a nice drive from
 town and better roads
 you never saw
 I received all the papers you
 sent very glad to get them
 If you can spare me any
 money you better send it
 imedightly⁶³ as I only have
 till the 24th to take my
 papers tell mother I will
 answer her letter soon
 also Henry

⁶² Location in Hall County, Nebraska.

⁶³ Immediately.

remember me to all my
caring friends
Yours b[roth]er James Durkee

Front, left side: blank

*Edition: Item 10, Letter, Mrs. A. S. Faville to Mrs. J. E. Durkee,
August 26, 1895, Chicago, Illinois*

Envelope [partially torn], front: [outline of a circular postmark:] WEST DULUTH [...];
[green oval-shaped 2-cents United States postage, printed/embossed on the envelope,
featuring the left-facing profile-outline of George Washington:] UNITED STATES
POS[TAGE]] * TWO 2 CE[NTS *]

Mrs J. E. Durkee⁶⁴
Sioux Rapids,⁶⁵
Iowa

Envelope, back: [illegible post mark]

Front:

624 North Campbell Ave⁶⁶
Chicago Aug 26, 95.⁶⁷

Dear Mrs Durkee:

I suppose you will be sur[-]
prised at hearing from one so
nearly a stranger to you as I am,
but I have thought so much about
you since learning of your recent
bereavement that I felt I must
let you know that you have
the most sincere sympathy of both
Mr Faville⁶⁸ and myself. We know
how sore a trial it is to lose a
baby. I left one, a year old, once
as well as usual, and went to
Milwaukee for treatment and he
died while I was so sick they
dared not tell me. I know how
vain it is and yet how much we seem
to need human sympathy. I beg

⁶⁴ Presumably a Durkee family member from the generation after Joseph, James, and Harvey.

⁶⁵ Location in Buena Vista County, Iowa.

⁶⁶ At the time of this edition (2022), this is no longer a residential address.

⁶⁷ 1895.

⁶⁸ Unknown individual; spouse of this letter's author.

you to believe that your lovely boy
 has only been taken into the school
 "Where he no longer needs your poor
 protection but Christ himself doth
 rule."⁶⁹ It has always been a comfort
 to me to feel that however much
 my other boys might do to grieve
 me, that one was safe, absolutely
 safe. I know God will speak com
 fort to your sorrowing hearts as

Back:

only He can, if you will let Him
 He knows what is best as we
 cannot. And after all, this life
 is so short, and so full of trouble
 that it is a great thing to be able
 to say, and feel sure, "It is well
 with the child."⁷⁰ I do hope you
 will not give way to despair nor
 question the goodness of our Heaven[-]
 ly Father, and I am sure you feel
 thankful that he lent you your
 angel boy if only for a few months.
 That you and your husband may
 be better Christians for this trial
 of your faith is what I am sure
 you will desire more than anything
 else. That all the consolations of
 the Bible and religion, may be yours
 and that you may be sure that
 many hearts that you may not even
 think of, sympathize with you in
 your great sorrow, and commend
 you to Him who wounds only to
 heal, is the earnest prayer of
 Yours sincerely
 (Mrs) A. S. Faville.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Quote from the 1850 poem "Resignation" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) on the death of his daughter Fanny.

⁷⁰ Holy Bible, Old Testament, 2 Kings 4:26.

⁷¹ Unknown individual.

*Edition: Item 11, Envelope, addressed to Mrs. M. R. Durkee,
no date, no place of origin*

Back [handwritten, in pencil]:

[...] Hoag
uncles wife
Mrs. Louisa Hoag
-93

Front [illegible postmark] [handwritten, in ink]:

Mrs M. R. Durkee
Leeds, Columbia
County Wiscon[sin]
Wisconsin

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The primary-source edition published above originated in the "History and Editing" course offered by CSUF's History Department.