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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).

University Archives and Special Collections.

SC 64.

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<sup>th</sup><sup>1</sup> 1862  
Dear Edna<sup>2</sup> 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 longues<sup>3</sup> 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

---

<sup>1</sup> Corrected from "8<sup>th</sup>."

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Durkee's wife.

<sup>3</sup> Lungs.

room with a stove in it and a rick<sup>4</sup> 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 Hospitell  
 Washington, February 9<sup>th</sup> 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 hospitet at first and then the Docter ordered me to be taken to town to the Brigate hospitet 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].

<sup>4</sup> 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 covement<sup>5</sup> 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 James<sup>6</sup> 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

---

<sup>5</sup> Government.

<sup>6</sup> 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 ferlow<sup>7</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 1862  
 Dear Edna I received your letter  
 in due time it found me well I  
 am gaining in flesh, and feel first

---

<sup>7</sup> Furlough: leave of absence.

rate Edna, I have had a good tim  
 visating Charles<sup>8</sup> 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 Berdon<sup>9</sup>  
 wont let me go Charles would give  
 me a good positione, but I cant go  
 I found lots of boys I [k]new, I found  
 amoung the rest, Butler Ives,<sup>10</sup> and  
 several from Malone<sup>11</sup> 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 Burnside<sup>12</sup> 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

---

<sup>8</sup> Unknown individual; perhaps identical with Charlie Powel mentioned below in this letter.

<sup>9</sup> Colonel Hiram Berdan (1824-1893), Union Army.

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

<sup>11</sup> Location in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin.

<sup>12</sup> Major General Ambrose Burnside (1824-1881), Union Army.

from our house to Lowville,<sup>13</sup> 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,<sup>14</sup> 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  
 Williams<sup>15</sup> at Sun Prairie<sup>16</sup> 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 fellows<sup>17</sup> 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 Hiram<sup>18</sup> 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 harvey<sup>19</sup> 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

---

<sup>13</sup> Location in Columbia County, Wisconsin.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Durkee's brother James.

<sup>15</sup> Unknown individual.

<sup>16</sup> Location in Dane County, Wisconsin.

<sup>17</sup> Probably a reference to the Wisconsin General Assembly.

<sup>18</sup> Unknown individual.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Durkee's and James Durkee's brother.

Front, left side:

Edna you tell mother that  
 I saw Peat Lampron<sup>20</sup>  
 Isa Lamprons boy the on[e]  
 thay youst<sup>21</sup> to call Bull Nevy  
 the boys have lots of fun with  
 him Mother will remember him  
 I also saw Charlie Powel<sup>22</sup> and  
 albert andrews<sup>23</sup> and andrew miller<sup>24</sup>  
 and lots of others Charles says he saw  
 Hatter<sup>25</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

---

<sup>20</sup> Unknown individual.

<sup>21</sup> Used.

<sup>22</sup> Unknown individual.

<sup>23</sup> Unknown individual.

<sup>24</sup> Unknown individual.

<sup>25</sup> Unknown individual.

Picket<sup>26</sup> 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<sup>27</sup> 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 <sup>the 2nd</sup> 1862  
 Friday.. Dear Mother  
 it is with regret that I seat myself  
 this morning to write you the sad  
 and mournful news of <sup>the</sup> death  
 of your son he was shot last night  
 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].

<sup>26</sup> Guard post.

<sup>27</sup> 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  
 Charles<sup>28</sup> 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 the<sup>29</sup> he and I  
 sent by express I supos you have

---

<sup>28</sup> Perhaps Charles Powel, mentioned in Letter 2.

<sup>29</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Run<sup>30</sup>  
 June 16<sup>th</sup> 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 Falmouth<sup>31</sup>  
 on the 11<sup>th</sup> 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

---

<sup>30</sup> Location and battle site (1861 and 1862) in Prince William County, Virginia

<sup>31</sup> 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  
 slood<sup>32</sup> 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. Works<sup>33</sup>  
 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  
 Durkee<sup>34</sup> Durkee & [...]  
 Leeds<sup>35</sup> James Durkee  
 is hereby respect[-]  
 ed to call at the

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<sup>32</sup> Slowed.

<sup>33</sup> Fortifications.

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

<sup>35</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup>  
 My Dear Son,  
 your letter of May the 17<sup>th</sup>  
 came to hand July the 29<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup>  
 My Dear Son,  
 your letter of May the 1<sup>st</sup>  
 came to hand July the 29<sup>th</sup> 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 <sup>don't</sup> 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 Huntington<sup>36</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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].

<sup>36</sup> 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,<sup>37</sup> V[irgini]a., Feb. 6 1865.<sup>38</sup>

Mrs M. R. Durkee

City Point

Co[mmonwealth of] V[irgini]a

Madam!

I am directed by the Lieutenant General  
Commanding,<sup>39</sup> to acknowledge the receipt of  
yours of the 28<sup>th</sup> 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,<sup>40</sup>  
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. Parker<sup>41</sup>

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

J E Mulford<sup>42</sup>

Fort Monroe

V[irgini]a

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<sup>37</sup> Location in Prince George County, Virginia.

<sup>38</sup> Corrected from "1864" by the writer.

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

<sup>40</sup> John Elmer Mulford.

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

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

Back, right side:

John T. Johnson<sup>43</sup>  
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,<sup>44</sup> Vicksburg<sup>45</sup> April 1<sup>st</sup>  
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]<sup>46</sup> G[eorgi]a on  
the 24<sup>th</sup> of March Arived in our  
lines on the last day of the  
Month we had a very teagous<sup>47</sup>  
journy had to march from  
Jackson<sup>48</sup> to the Big Black  
river<sup>49</sup> 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:

Parolle<sup>50</sup> how long we shall  
stope I cannot say But as  
soon as I get my discharge I

---

<sup>43</sup> Presumably this letter was sent to Mrs. M. R. Durkee via Mr. Johnson.

<sup>44</sup> Union Army camp in Warren County, Mississippi

<sup>45</sup> Location in Warren County, Mississippi.

<sup>46</sup> Confederate Army prisoner-of-war camp in Sumter County, Georgia.

<sup>47</sup> Phonetic spelling of "tedious."

<sup>48</sup> Location in Hinds County, Mississippi

<sup>49</sup> A tributary to the Mississippi River.

<sup>50</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 '63<sup>51</sup>  
 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

---

<sup>51</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 City<sup>52</sup> Sept[ember] 24<sup>th</sup> 1868

J[ames]. Durkee In a/c <sup>53</sup> with C. W. Rogers & Co.		D <sup>54</sup>
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	

<sup>52</sup> Location in Floyd County, Iowa.

<sup>53</sup> Account current.

<sup>54</sup> Presumably "Debt."

[Dec 2]	[To]	52 ft [Pine] 2 <sup>nd</sup> 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  
 a full and impartial a/c of all  
 the account of C. W. Rogers & Co with  
 J Durkee

E. H.<sup>55</sup>

Dated Chetopa<sup>56</sup> Kansas July 9<sup>th</sup>, 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]<sup>57</sup>

December 6<sup>th</sup> / 73<sup>58</sup>

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. B<sup>59</sup> – and one from  
Henry Church<sup>60</sup> with \$5.00 it  
comes just in the nick of

Back, left side:

time to make out my  
Homestead papers<sup>61</sup> I wish  
you could send me some  
untill I can get to work  
again. I have the promise

---

<sup>55</sup> E. Higbey.

<sup>56</sup> Location in Labette County, Kansas.

<sup>57</sup> Location in Adams County, Nebraska.

<sup>58</sup> 1873.

<sup>59</sup> Possibly "Green Backs," a slang term for paper dollar bills.

<sup>60</sup> Unknown individual.

<sup>61</sup> 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]land<sup>62</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup>

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  
 imedightly<sup>63</sup> as I only have  
 till the 24<sup>th</sup> to take my  
 papers tell mother I will  
 answer her letter soon  
 also Henry

---

<sup>62</sup> Location in Hall County, Nebraska.

<sup>63</sup> 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. Durkee<sup>64</sup>  
Sioux Rapids,<sup>65</sup>  
Iowa

Envelope, back: [illegible post mark]

Front:

624 North Campbell Ave<sup>66</sup>  
Chicago Aug 26, 95.<sup>67</sup>

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 Faville<sup>68</sup> 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

---

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

<sup>65</sup> Location in Buena Vista County, Iowa.

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

<sup>67</sup> 1895.

<sup>68</sup> 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."<sup>69</sup> 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."<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup>

---

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

<sup>70</sup> Holy Bible, Old Testament, 2 Kings 4:26.

<sup>71</sup> 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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