

Michaela Malneritch and Michael Ortega (editors)

*A Glimpse into North America's Colonial Past:
The Blackden-Stoddard Letters (May 22, 1771, to April 10, 1773)*

Shelfmark

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

University Archives and Special Collections.

SC 64.

War Memorabilia Collection.

Durkee/Blackden Correspondence.

May 22, 1771, to April 10, 1773.

Six letters (numbered 1 to 6 below).

Introduction

The six pre-Revolutionary War letters edited here are part of the "Durkee/Blackden Correspondence" of the "War Memorabilia Collection" that is held in CSUF's University Archives and Special Collections. They belonged to Miss Florence Durkee of Brea, California, and were donated to CSUF in 1973. The first letter is merely a fragment (half of it is missing), while the remaining letters are in very good condition despite the occasional hole or ink blot. The letters are written in cursive, in black ink, on small stationary paper, and some of them show traces of the red wax seals with which they were once sealed.

The letters were written between May 22, 1771 (letter 1), and April 10, 1773 (letter 6). They are authored by Samuel Blackden (letters 1, 2, 3, and 5) and Josiah Stoddard (letters 4 and 6), and addressed to Sally Stoddard/Blackden, Josiah's sister and Samuel's future wife. Samuel's and Sally's marriage took place between October 3, 1772 (letter 5), and April 10, 1773 (letter 6). The letters were not written in a single place because the authors were regularly traveling throughout colonial North America; locations mentioned include New Haven and Hartford, Connecticut, as well as Poughkeepsie, New York. Samuel Blackden's letters display an air of romance and frustration; he expresses his care and love for Sally, but also reprimands her for not responding to his letters in a timely fashion. Josiah Stoddard's letters are more casual, as he primarily writes about his traveling plans, arranging accommodations for Sally to visit, his recreational activities, and his thoughts on local politics and views of the colonies. These letters are historically significant because they provide insight into the daily lives of people living in the colonies, recreational activities, travel, and social relations, but they also touch on interaction between brother and sister, as well as man and wife, and they exhibit human emotion.

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: Letter 1, Samuel Blackden to Sally Stoddard,
May 22, 1771, Hartford, Connecticut*

Front: [top line(s) of page are missing; right side of page is partially missing]

To Give way to g [...] t leave [...]
 Who have the [...] To Mourne [...]
 Consider my dear [...] t Tis Seperat [...]
 to be But Short, [...] y Furnish [...]
 means of passing through Irksome Life [...]
 Meeting will make us Ample Sa [...]
 our parting, and A Number of Happy [...]
 Seperation, forgive me Sally for the B [...]
 Writing my mind is Not enough at [...]
 The pains of parting are yet Fresh - I will [...]
 from Boston, and do not Disappoint me in [...]
 and then a Memorandom from You, [...]
 Unspeakable pleasure to him who [...]
 my Dear Sally yours only -
 Sam[uel] B[lackden]
 Hartford Wednesday
 22 May 1771

Back: [modern hand] 26 - From Hartford - May 22, 1771 - from Sam B - to - Sally -

*Edition: Letter 2, Samuel Blackden to Sally Stoddard,
June 24, 1772, New Haven, Connecticut*

Front:

My D[ea]r Sally- Just as I was sealing the inclosed Scolding Letter I Received your fav[o]r
 for which pray accept my best Thanks- I must own my D[ea]r Sally I
 do not see the least impropriety in your Coming to New Haven on y[ou]r
 Return from New York, and the Journey I shou[l]d think wou[l]d be Rather
 Pleasant than Tedious, - Indeed my D[ea]r Sally I wou[l]d not Solicit any
 favour of you that shou[l]d lessen you in my esteem, the Coming to New
 Haven is no more than I wou[l]d willingly let my own sister do in the same
 Situation - however my D[ea]r Girl if you or your friends think it improper
 I have done - and shall defer the Hopes of seeing you till August
 when I shall be at Salisbury¹ - I wish you my Dear Sally a pleas[an]t
 Journey and may Gaurdian [sic] Angels Attend your Steps [...] and Return
 you to your Affectionate
 Sam[uel] Blackden
 New Haven
 June 24.th 1772.

Back: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand] 25 - From New Haven - June 24, 1772 -
 From Sam Blackden - 24 is missing

To
 Miss Sally Stoddard
 Open this first

¹ Salisbury, Connecticut.

My D^r Sally - Just as I was Sealing the inclosed Letter I Received your fav^r.
 for which pray accept my best Thanks - I must own my D^r Sally I
 do not see the Least impropriety in your coming to New Haven on y^r.
 Return from New York, and the Journey I should think would be rather
 Pleasant than tedious, - Indeed my D^r Sally I would not solicit any
 favour of you that should lessen you in my esteem, the coming to New
 Haven is no more than I would willingly let my own feet do in the same
 Situation - however my D^r Girl if you or your friends think it improper
 I have done - and shall defer the hopes of seeing you till August
 when I shall be at Salisbury - I wish you my Dear Sally a pleas^t.
 Journey and may Guardian Angel attend your steps and return
 you to your Affectionate
 Sam Blackden

New Haven
 June 24th 1772.

Figure (above): Letter 2, Samuel Blackden to Sally Stoddard, June 24, 1772, New Haven, Connecticut, Front.

Edition: Letter 3, Samuel Blackden to Sally Stoddard, June 24, 1772, New Haven, Connecticut

Front left: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand] 27 - From New Haven - June 24th, 1772 - From Sam Blackden

To
Miss Sally Stoddard

Front right:

You little Pup, why did you Let Luther² put you of the Notion of writing to me - do you think I will ever bear such treatment. No by Heavens I will break your Chains in pieces and Cast your bond asunder as I Told you in a former Letter - you have Nothing to do but write me and I will admit of no Excuse for your not doing it, while I am hurried and fatigued with Business I can always find Time to write you and if you will not answer me I will write no more
 Very well say you a pretty Scolding Letter indeed to Receive from a humble slave why Let the poor stuttering braging [?] [...] Devil Rave as he pleases, my Chains are too strongly Forged for him to breake, I[']ll make him know The power I have over him and Exercise him in obedience that he may bear The Yoke of Matrimony with Patience -
 Well but my dear Sally do you Take any pleasure in my Company or Conversation if you do why will you not indulge me in the most pleasing of all Correspondance one between two Persons whose Greatest pleasure is [...] making each other happy whose Words are dictated by sincerity and whose Thoughts are Inspired by Love with Those ends in View how often may we make [...] apleasing Improvement of a leisure hour, why then my Charming Girl will you deny me The only Thing I have had need to solicit in Vain

Back left:

Remember my dear Sally tis one thing to gain a heart and another to keep it then let our study be to insure what we have Gain[e]d and Cherish and improve every tender Affection and increase if possible in Esteem and good will - A foolish Stupid piece of stuff is the foregoing, however if you will not write you must take what my Barren Brain furnishes - [...] But my D[ea]r Sally be assured that Nothing but unkindness Can alienate my Affections nor anything make me so miserable [sic] - I[f] you are not Gone to York³ before this Arrives Remember the Miniature picture I wrote you about and take Care to have it done in the best manner Accept a thousand Good wishes from, My D[ea]r Sally your Affectionate Friend
 Sam[uel] Blackden
 New Haven
 June 24.th 1772 -

Back right: [traces of red wax seal]

Edition: Letter 4, Josiah Stoddard to Sally Stoddard, July 18, 1772, Poughkeepsie, New York

Front:

Dear Sister
 We are just come to Mr Davies's after a very tedious Passage of four Days

² Sally's brother.

³ Presumably New York.

this Being a Saturday. Capt[ain] Smith is much undetermin[e]d when he shall be down again, he sais [sic] he will write me word so that I shall be in Poughkeepsie, nigh as soon you will, I shall if Possible send you down four or five Dollars for Capt[ain] Smith. I have spoke to Mr Leonard Van Cleek for Lodgings for you whither you must go as soon as you come to Poughkeepsie & hire one of the Men to Bring along your trunk, but first see that Your Bed & three sheets are convey[e]d to Mr Davies's house Pay the Capt[ain] for your Passage [...] up - Give my Compliments to Mr Heron his Lady & each of Family [sic] in turn, to Miss Sally in Particular - to all acquaintances in general James is come from Salisbury with my Horse & sais [sic] friends are all well - from yours affectionately
 Josiah Stoddard [sic]
 Poughkeepsie July 18.
 1772

Back: [modern hand] 28 - From Josiah Stoddard - July 18 - 1772 - From Poughkeepsie

[...] [St]oddard
 [...] [M]r. A. Herring, in [?]
 [...] y
 New York

*Edition: Letter 5, Samuel Blackden to Sally Stoddard,
 October 30, 1772, New Haven, Connecticut*

Front:

New Haven Octob[er]. 30. 1772
 My Dearest Sally -
 Mr. Bagrag [...] you was well, it Gave me Great pleasure, but why didn't you write - It is the [...] foolish thing in Nature to let any insignificant Triffling punctilios come into consideration between us - after what is past you have no Excuse - This is the Very first Opportunity I have had since I Came from Salisbury of writing, or you wou[ld] have heard from me before, for by Heaven Nothing Can give me greater Satisfaction Except your Company, [...] why will you be behind hand with me - you surely are sincere, I must think it, then why this Reserve - Mr. Whiting is Gone to York and will not be with me any more as he has fix[e]d upon a plan to settle in So that I am now Close confin[e]d - I shall not be able I am Very much affraid [sic] to Come to Salisbury before The Appointed Time but shall write you more particularly when leisure will admit - I have partly Agreed for the house where Mr Botsford lived - tis to be Properly Repair[e]d and I Shall endeavor to Get Things ready for the Completion of my happiness in The Arms of my Dearest Girl - There has been No Opportunity of sending your Things but Dr. Baker will send a team to me Next Week by which I shall send Them if None offers before - from my D[ea]r Sally yours for ever - Sam[uel] Blackden

Back: [modern hand] 29 - From New Haven - Oct. 30 - 1772 - From Sam Blackden - to Sally -

*Edition: Letter 6, Josiah Stoddard to Sally Blackden,
 April 10, 1773, Castleton, Vermont*

Front left: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand] 14 - From - Josiah Stoddard - From Castleton Apr. 10, 1773

To
Mrs Sally Blackden

Front right:

Castleton April 10th 1773

Dear Sister

This day I din[e]d with Mr Evarts. had
a dish of good Tea which was very agreeable after
so long Abstinence from everything palata-
ble - I think this a most excellent Country -
to get an easy livelihood in - the inhabitants
are few, but all friend[ly]. but all joyous friendly
& kind, we have nothing here similar to our
own envious malicious folks except the
Misketers [sic] which are so plenty, that the Inhab-
itants think themselves able to supply a foreign
Market - tomorrow we set for Tionderoga⁴ [sic]. Mr
Everets helps us along & keeps our home till our
Return - The terror of going to Quebeck [sic] is much
lessened by being informed that no one ever
pretends to go down the falls on the Rafts -
I had a very ill turn this morning by drinking
to [sic] much Water, at present am perfectly well -
Day before Yesterday I cut my Name in a
green Beach [sic] & whose else you may guess
turn over

Back left: [traces of red wax seal]

there let them grow under the influence of cupid
& Venus; but Mum. I shou[ld] have wrote to
Luther but cannot afford Paper I have sent him
two, & one Letter to you is as good as a Letter
one each - adieu give my best Wishes
to all Fr[i]ends
Yours Jos[ia]h Stoddard
James is in good Spirits & sends Resp[ec]ts
to all friends

Back right: [traces of red wax seal]

ABOUT THE EDITOR: Michaela Malneritch of Norco, California, completed her B.A. in History and Journalism/New Media at California Baptist University (2017). She is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where she is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). She is a 2019 recipient of CSUF's Black Family Fellowship in History. She also works as a Park Interpretive Specialist for California State Parks.

ABOUT THE EDITOR: Michael Ortega of Diamond Bar, California, is currently pursuing a B.A. in History, with a minor in Political Science, at California State University, Fullerton. The primary-source edition published above originated in the "History and Editing" course offered by CSUF's History Department.

⁴ Fort Ticonderoga, New York.