

Portland July 4<sup>th</sup> 1865

My Dear Sister

It is so strange that I have never been able to learn your address since the first year after the war commenced. Most of my letters to you have been directed to Care of R. C. Wallingford. The last mail ever received at Portland was on the first day of April and it brought a letter from Helen. For three and a half weeks after I felt there were no Boats, no mails, consequently letters and no newspapers. Consequently we had no reliable news. The ladies kept at home, the men took to the woods and the negroes were riding over the country spreading the wildest rumours. One day they would say the "Gambages" were at Castville burning every house as they came - again, five hundred were crossing Mallett's Ferry - Then they were at Myers Plantation burning his Gin House. Then were at Canada with an immense wagon train. It would be impossible for me to describe to you the terrible state of excitement the country was in. Men fleeing in every direction. ~~When~~ we had every reason to expect a Gunboat or two up the river, but when a fleet of nineteen Boats came up to take us by surprise. It was on the 26<sup>th</sup> April said passed on the 27<sup>th</sup>

the River. On the night of the 26<sup>th</sup> about an hour  
after dark one of the Transports with about twelve  
or fifteen hundred soldiers landed. We had  
expected, of course, that the Government property  
would be destroyed and thought it very probable  
that the place would be burned as we had  
heard that was the fate of all the Ware Houses  
between Selma & Montgomery. When Alex saw  
that the Boat was landing, he took his lantern  
and white flag and went down meet the Officer  
in command to deliver up the keys and ask  
protection for the private property (I stood on  
the Bluff anxiously watching events, we the only two  
white persons on the place while the banks were  
lined with negroes from the neighbouring plantation)  
The Officer very courteously assured him, that his  
private property should not be disturbed, that  
a guard would not be necessary. But while  
this conversation was taking place the soldiers  
jumped ashore, rushed up the hill and swept  
over the place like a whirlwind. I tried to reach  
the house before the soldiers, but in vain. As I entered  
the dining room, the noise from the smash of glass  
crust of bursting doors & drawers, with the oaths  
of the soldiers scrambling for the valuables was terrific.  
My drawers, sideboard and cupboards, and trunks  
were already emptied, contents <sup>gone</sup> <sup>or</sup> now from one  
to the other. not seen

never have believed, so much could have been done  
in so short a time. While this was going on at  
the Home, a similar scene was being enacted  
at the store, Amstehouse. Ware House and in  
the negro Houses. In about ten or fifteen  
minutes, the Officer met me at the door, and  
very politely inquired what they were doing.  
I told him they were doing very badly. He  
saw them carrying off arms full of table linen  
china, clothing, &c, &c. he made some of them  
carry back their loads and sent for guards  
and set them over the place but it was of  
little avail. I had trunks full of clothing  
for my husband, my children and myself  
laid up against a time of need but they  
were mostly swept away. Our cows, goats,  
sheep, and a part of our hogs are left with  
a little meat. We have a garden so that  
we will not suffer. After the Boats and Negroes  
all left we gathered up the fragments and  
were surprised that so much was left. We  
have no surplus of anything but "old clothes"  
but we could almost furnish a Jew shop with  
them. We feel devoutly grateful that the place  
was not burned and that we have a home  
left. Our loss was very heavy but it does not  
make us unhappy. It is not our first or our  
most severe trial. Mr Walmley and the boys

reached home about the first of June. Charlie  
rode five thousand miles horseback between the  
9<sup>th</sup> Nov and first June. He reached Johnston's  
Head Quarters two days before the surrender  
(just in time to be paroled and turn homeward).  
About two weeks after the "fall of Portland" a Boat  
stopped here and said they had come to wait  
for the Neg. troops that were marching down  
from Montgomery by land and were going  
to embark here, eight to ten thousand. You  
can imagine the distress we were in. We represented  
to the Officers that Providence would be a much  
more suitable place. That we had already  
suffered so severely. That if they came here the  
balance of our stock would be taken and we  
should be ruined. After being here over night  
they decided to ride up to Warrenton, met Gen  
Hawkins and persuade him to go to Providence.  
About 4 o'clock that evening an order came  
down for the Boat to go up to P. as the troops  
were there. That night W.P. Hollette was murdered  
either by the negro troops or his own servants  
and he lay for two days before any one could  
get to him. And then his grandson had to be  
a guard to see that he was buried. That same  
night other atrocities were committed. The troops  
lay there for nearly a week waiting for transports.  
The eight or ten Boats that came up for them all stopped  
here but we had the inexpressible satisfaction of telling

them "The Soldiers are at Providence" I might fill  
pages and you give you but a faint conception  
of what we have passed through. The country  
is in a terrible condition - the planters have no  
money - no crops and many of them nothing at all  
to sell. I consider the South ruined for this generation.  
Many of our wealthy neighbours will have nothing  
left excepting their lands and perhaps not that  
they have not even a bale of cotton to sell. Some  
of them have cotton from ten to one hundred  
bales. The negroes have done so little work  
since the invasion of this part of the country, that  
some of the plantations have not half crops.

Since I commenced this, I have received  
two letters ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> Eliza <sup>April 11</sup> and  
one from Helen <sup>April 10</sup> <sup>June 4</sup> and  
had one from Eliza of a later date, short, and  
apparently in a hurry. I should judge from that  
Lillie was staying with her in N. Haven. We  
have no mails in this part of the country  
so please direct my letters to Mrs. Mary  
A. Hance care D. R. W. Davis Mobile and  
he will forward them to me by Boat.  
Belle Dean rose this week that she expects  
to go north next week. No one scarcely can  
tell what they are going to do or what they  
are worth. People generally feel "Blue" many  
are talking about emigrating but the difficulty  
is they have nothing to emigrate with. Health

unless six months or a year brings about some  
great change this will be a miserable country  
to live in. Among the articles that the soldiers  
pillaged from us were three Bibles and a Prayer  
Book - nearly all my Daugerooty's? All Charlie  
Latin and other school Books, that Album you  
gave me with Remembrances of Fred and other  
mementoes of my dead children which no money  
could have bought. I wonder why it is that  
so few of my letters have been received. I  
have not had a line from you since a year  
last February and then it was only a line. Some  
six or seven letters have been received from  
Heelen with photographs of sister Eliza - Helen -  
Eliza - & Recordall. Give my love to each of  
your dear family, Father, Mother, Helen, Willie,  
~~and my dear little Eliza~~  
The Book is in keeping and I must  
close  
Your affectionate Sister

Ms Hall

Portland, July 4 1865

My Dear Sister

It is so strange that I have not been able to learn your address since the first year after the war commenced. Most of my letters to you have been directed to care of R. Cooke, Wallingford. The last mail ever received at Portland was on the first day of April and it brought a letter from Helen. In three and a half weeks after Selma fell there were no Boats, no mails, consequently no letters and no newspapers. Consequently we had no reliable news. The ladies kept at home, the men took to the woods and the negroes were riding over the country spreading the wildest rumours. One day they would say the "Yankees" were at Carloville burning every home as they came—again, five hundred were crossing Molett's Ferry—Then they were at Bob Myers Plantation burning his Gin House. Then they were at Camden with an immense wagon train. It would be impossible for me to describe to you the terrible state of excitement the country was in. Men fleeing in every direction. We had every reason to expect a gunboat or two up the river, but when a fleet of nineteen Boats came up it took us by surprise. It was on the 26<sup>th</sup> April. On the 27<sup>th</sup> the land raid passed up this side [new page] of the river. On the night of the 26<sup>th</sup> about an hour after dark one of the Transports with about twelve or fifteen hundred soldiers landed. We had expected, of course, that the Government property would be destroyed and thought it very probable that the place would be burned as we had heard that was the fate of all the Ware Houses between Selma and Montgomery. When Alex saw that the Boat was landing, he took his lantern and white flag and went down [to] meet the officer in command to deliver up the keys and ask protection for the private Property (I stood on the Bluff anxiously watching events, we the only two white person on the place while the banks were lined with negroes from the neighboring plantations.) The Officer very courteously assured him, that his private property should not be disturbed, that

private property should not be disturbed, that a guard would not be necessary. But while this conversation was taking place the soldiers jumped ashore, rushed up the hill and swept over the place like a whirlwind. I tried to reach the house before the soldiers, but in vain. As I entered the dining room, the noise from the smash of glass, crash of bursting doors and drawers, with the oaths of the soldiers scrambling for the valuables was terrific. My drawers, sideboard and cupboards, and trunks were already emptied, contents gone or strewn from one end of the house to the other. Had I not seen it, I could [new page]

never have believed, so much could have been done in so short a time. While this was going on at the House a similar scene was being enacted at the store, smokehouse, Ware House and in the negroe [sic] Houses. In about ten or fifteen minutes. The Officer met me at the door, and very politely inquired what they were doing. I told him they were doing very badly. He saw them carrying off arms full of table linen, china, clothing ect., etc. He made some of them carry back their loads and sent for guards and set them over the place but it was of little avail. I had trunks full of clothing for my husband, my children and myself laid up against a time of need but they were mostly swept away. Our Cows, Goats, sheep, and a part of our hogs are left with a little meat. We have a garden so that we will not suffer. After the Boats and Negroes all left we gathered up the fragments and were surprised that so much was left. We have no surplus of anything but "old clothes" but we could almost furnish a jew shop with them. We feel devoutly grateful that the place was not burned and that we have a home left. Our loss was very but it does not make us unhappy. It is not our first or our most severe trial. Mr. Walmsley and the boys [new page]

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The Boat is in hearing and I must close

Your affectionate Sister  
MA Hall