Evans, Charles. Correspondence, 1862–1893. .10 foot.
Collector. Correspondence (1862–1863) between Lt. Lyle Garrett of the Twenty-third Iowa Infantry and his wife, Mary Garrett. His letters describe camp life, attitudes toward officers, and troop movements in Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Garrett also describes the general conduct of the war, soldiers’ views about action in other theaters of the war, attitudes concerning the South, slavery, and the destruction caused by the war. The collection also contains three letters (1866–1893) regarding the Garrett family in general.

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Biography:
Background information:
Lyle Abraham Garrett was born in Madison Township, Highland County, Ohio, March 18, 1823. He was the oldest child of William and Mary (Dean) Garrett who were farmers. Lyle married Martha Ann Patterson on June 1, 1843 in Highland County, Ohio, but she died within two years, leaving no children. After his wife’s death, Lyle and his brother, Austin, went west to Colorado and spent time exploring the front range of the Rocky Mountains, and climbing Pike’s Peak. They both returned home after about a year’s absence.

Lyle married Elenor Blain Stuart as his second wife on November 5, 1845 in Highland County, Ohio. They moved to Polk County, Iowa about 1847 with Lyle’s parents and siblings and with other family members where they purchased farms just five miles west of Des Moines. The couple had two children, Margaret W., born about 1846 in Ohio, and Cyrus W., born about 1848 in Iowa. Both Elenor and Margaret died in July 1849 in Polk County, Iowa. Once again, Lyle left home to join the California gold rush from 1852 to 1856. He returned home to Iowa in 1856 and turned his attention back to farming.

Lyle married Mary A. Hamilton as his third wife on October 13, 1858 in Iowa. She was a schoolteacher and was 17 years his junior. Mary was born April 16, 1840, in Illinois. Her family was, for the most part, strongly sympathetic to the southern cause during the Civil War. Mary was most definitely a supporter of the Union and barely tolerated her Copperhead relatives.

The 23rd Iowa Volunteer Infantry was mustered in September 1862 and Lyle was one of the first to enlist as a private. He was assigned to Company “C” in which he served for the duration of his enlistment. He was promoted to lieutenant in late 1863 after the death of one officer and the resignation of another. The bulk of the correspondence in the Charles Evans Collection is between Lyle and Mary Garrett during the three years of his enlistment in the Union Army. Lyle rented his farm to tenants during his absence and Mary lived with his parents at Cottage Home when she wasn’t traveling or teaching.
Lyle’s son, Cyrus, enlisted in the 8th Iowa Cavalry in 1863 when the unit was created and spent most of his service along the Tennessee Valley. He was injured in 1864 and spent several months recuperating in various Army hospitals before going back to duty. He survived the war and was living in Indian Territory [Oklahoma] in 1871.

After the war, most of the Garrett family moved to the Kansas City, Missouri area in 1867. They bought a fruit farm there and stayed for about 10 years. Then Lyle and his brother, Austin, moved to Cottage Grove Township, Allen County, Kansas in May 1879, where they both bought farms. Austin had moved on to California by 1888.

It does not appear that Lyle and Mary ever had children of their own, although Ida F. Bilsland, Mary’s niece, lived with them in Kansas and there is mention in one of Mary’s war letters of adopting her.

See Also: Garrett family biographical dates list at end of this finding aid

Box 1
Folder:
1. Keokuk, [Iowa]. September 26, 1862.
   Re: The trip from Des Moines Valley and the camp life. Speculation on where the 23rd Iowa will be sent.

2. St. Louis, [Missouri]. October 7, 1862.
   Re: The food served the troops (bread, coffee and bacon) … and the disgrace of some officers and men when on duty in St. Louis as their conduct was rowdy and unbecoming. Received orders to Pilot Knob.

3. Headquarters 23rd Iowa Infantry near Patterson, Wayne Co., Missouri, Saturday, October 18, 1862.
   Re: The march south from St. Louis and how certain officers consider and feed their men and how others are selfish. A confiscation spree Garrett took part in (a team of horses). Rumors of where the 23rd Iowa is likely to be sent. Describes growing troop strength.

   Re: Action taken in a foray into Arkansas and a battle at Pokahatus [Pocahontas, AR] and the strategy of the war as seen by Garrett.

5. [Camp Patterson, Missouri]. Tuesday 11 o’clock A.M. November 4, [1862].
   Re: Expresses opinion on how war could be won quickly. Discusses wife’s plan to set up a millinery business in Des Moines.

6. Camp Patterson, Missouri. November 23, 24, 25, 1862. [faded, difficult to read]
   Re: Speculation as to what the meaning of the Emancipation Proclamation will mean in the waging of the war … Criticism of tactics employed in the war by his
commander. Suggestions to follow up the retreating Rebels. Discusses wife’s plan to go into business in Des Moines. Describes domestic camp chores and activities.

7. Soldiers’ Home, St. Louis, Missouri. December 3, 1862.
Re: Death of Colonel [William] Dewey and proposed trip to escort body to Des Moines … Criticism because there is no pay - worry because his wife is without funds … Recollections of the engagement at Pitmans Ferry. Describes the Soldiers’ Home where he is staying.

8. Camp Patterson, Missouri. December 14, 1862.
Re: Weather conditions that will make the Mississippi River impassable. Garrett's attempt to move up in rank, and Burnside's efforts at Fredericksburg (thinking it an impressive victory from the accounts in the papers.)

9. Camp Patterson, Missouri. December 15, 1862. [faded, stained, difficult to read]
Re: The movement of sick from Arcadia. Account of Burnside's tactics and movements at Fredericksburg, the victories being achieved "everywhere." Food rations provided the army. Feelings on the fate of the nation. Discussion of wife’s proposal to go to work as a milliner in Des Moines. Money concerns.

Re: The move from Camp Patterson and the strenuous march over rough terrain … The temper of the men (none would reenlist) … Concern for his wife and a fear of being attacked by the Rebels tomorrow on the Current River.

Re: Experiences on picket line in the cold of the Missouri hills. Wife’s financial situation. Selling and buying real estate in Iowa since the war makes the prices attractive. Describes Charley Hepburn’s illness and death. Lack of pay and scarcity of stamps.

Re: Recounts the results of a company election for second lieutenant – Lyle was defeated. States opinion of government “leeches”. General Davidson’s inhumanity to the troops.

13. Camp Chase, near Vanburen. January 11, 1863. [faded, closely written, hard to read]
Re: Troops soon to be on the march, possibly to Springfield. Opinions of southeast Missouri land and criticism of the Union handling of its opposition of the Rebels in that area of the war. Further discussion of Garrett’s defeat in his bid for second lieutenant.

Re: Gave the money his wife sent him to a sick man who was being discharged and had little money to get home. General remarks on camp conditions and also on the
possibility of buying and selling land at his home in Iowa because of the price in the market.


Re: Detailed account of the actions of the company [23rd Iowa] from October 25, 1862 to the end of January 1863 (the activities and marches around the Missouri-Arkansas line near Van Buren and the rest of Southeast Missouri) Plans for new troop movements in the Missouri - Arkansas area, possibly to Batesville or Little Rock.

Re: Describes the terrain of Missouri. The 23rd Iowa is brigaded with the 21st and 22nd Iowa under Col. Stone and BGen. Fitz Henry Warren. Outraged by the cost of local items (bakery goods, papers, etc.) purchased from the sutlers, whom Garrett calls “sharks.” Implies that “contrabands” or escaped slaves are in the Iowa regiments, but are growing “beautifully scarce” as the troops move south. He expresses his [less than favorable] opinion of “darkies.” Garrett has been ill, but is recovering. Discusses the recent effect of Indiana and Illinois refusing to furnish any more men or money for the war effort and the effect on morale for the Iowa troops. Bemoans the moral laxity among his fellow soldiers. Rumors of troop movements.

Re: Garrett’s pay is $13.00 per month as a private. Describes iron works and ore in area. Criticism of Gen. Davidson, especially for a bargain between he and Confederate Gen. Marmaduke not to attack each other when the Union had a larger force. Complains of picket duty. Business advice to his wife: teach instead of millinery partnership since capital expenses are lower.

Re: Copperhead activities. Description of camp life. Visit to Mary’s cousins, the Hedges, in Pilot Knob. Cautions his wife to be careful who she confides information from his letters to.

20. Iron Mountain, Missouri. March 8, 1863. (p. 5-8 closely written)
Re: Recollections of the past cold winter. Camp life; description of the gambling, drinking and camp followers. Corruption of the chaplains and ministers in the Army (with examples). Drawing lots for leaves of absence.

Re: Description of local farms and roads. Plans for his release from the Army in 2.5 more years. Complains of his brother-in-law, Marion’s, tendency to argue illogically. Outlines his religious beliefs.
22. Camp near Carthage, Louisiana. April 19, 1863. [faded, stained, creased, torn, hard to read]
Re: Praises his wife’s discretion in not repeating sensitive information he has written. Comments on the news of the war that reaches them that Charlotte, SC is officially taken. Mentions that the 23rd Iowa is only 20 miles from Vicksburg. Feeling on Vicksburg, and remarks on the ransacking of plantations in Louisiana and the people who are left. (The justice of such acts.) Describes his feelings on witnessing the conditions of former slaves. Comments on the character of the head of the family his wife may board with while she teaches.

23. On board the steamer, Continental. October 19, 1863.
Re: Describes people along the Mississippi, their apparent loyalty and desire for peace, food rations provided the army. Indicates that his son, Cyrus, just joined the Army. Lyle is returning to his unit after a leave of absence which he spent in Iowa with his wife and family.

Re: Troops leaving the steamer for Little Rock, Vicksburg and the Cumberland Army. Reminisces about the fifty days he spent with his wife and family.

25. On board the steamer, Continental, a few miles above Milliken’s Bend, Louisiana. October 27, 1863.
Re: Remembers the battles of Vicksburg and Milliken’s Bend which he took part in earlier that year. Mentions the movement of troops via the Mississippi River into Texas.

26. On board the Continental, 25 miles below Batonrouch [Baton Rouge], Louisiana and later at Camp Carlton in New Orleans, Louisiana. October 29, 1863
Re: Describes the beautiful plantations and the state house at Baton-rouch [Baton Rouge]. Recalls the cannonade during the battle of Grand Gulf on April 29, 1863 and action at Port Gibson where friends fell in battle. Finds that the Iowa units have moved about 200 miles beyond Brasure [Brashear] City. Prices are exorbitant and food in New Orleans is limited.

Re: The Yazoo Pass on the river is now open to all steamers and Union boats have passed through for cotton. States that speculation in cotton will go on whether the war does or not. The 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Iowa are soon to return south to Vicksburg. Lyle toured Memphis and describes the stature of Andrew Jackson in the city park. Describes the southern girls that try to tempt the Union soldiers desert.

Re: Outlines his reasons for leaving home to serve the cause of the Union, and how the politicians might now undo all the good that the war has achieved. Describes the deplorable conditions in the hospitals and convalescent camps where the men are half
starved. Advises his wife to avoid the benevolent societies which fill their own pockets with donations rather than assisting soldiers in need. Mentions the lack of respect and confidence held by the men for their officers. Preparations are being made for the trip into Texas interior.

Re: Sabbath services on the beach. Oystering in the bay. Skirmishes with the enemy, the poor management of paper affairs in the army especially in regard to pay for the men.

Re: The activities of Sherman and Johnson near Atlanta, an expression of confidence in Sherman, the feelings and exhausted condition of an army just after a battle … a reference to the fact that the love of greenbacks has influenced the government officials outside the administration to prevent an honest administration from bringing the war to a quick end.

Re: Generals Grant and Banks and their western holding policies … an opinion that had Buchanan remained President the war couldn't have been won … the food and living conditions for the army in Louisiana … Lincoln's renomination and the fact that it is better than a victory in the field of battle … guerilla warfare and how the guerillas when caught ought to be shot and the countryside burned for 20 miles around in an effort to prevent such actions and teach the southerners a lesson.

32. Morganza Bend, Louisiana. August 21, 1864
Re: Expresses concern for son Cyrus who is in the 8th Cavalry under BGen McCook which was in the Battle of Newman. The Union was surrounded and all that weren't killed were captured by Rebels. Describes the naval battle at Mobile Bay between rebel Admiral Buchanan and Admiral Faragut.

33. Morganza Bend, Louisiana. August 28, 1864
Re: The Army of the Trans-Mississippi is being reorganized and the 23rd Iowa is now part of 3rd Division, 19 Army Corps under BGen. Lawler. Describes Lawler very unfavorably. Mentions the practice of placing Union soldier with southern families as "safeguards" since most of the men folk are gone. A critical comment of General Banks and General Lawler for taking army food and supplies for personal profits and distribution … an account of General McCook's and General Stoneman's raid south of Atlanta saying that the Union advance guard had been wiped out. Reiterates concern for his son. The hopes of the CSA now lying only in the Chicago convention. States his intention to vote for Lincoln.

34. Army of the Trans-Mississippi, 23rd Iowa. Morganza, Louisiana. September 8, 1864
Re: Three brigades have left but 23rd Iowa and 35th Wisconsin are still waiting for transportation. Corruption in the Union army ranks by selling supplies to the southerners for personal profit. Those caught are imprisoned on Ship Island or on the
Dry Tortugas. The fall of Atlanta … references to the copperhead activity of the North and how it is effecting the soldiers.

35. Morganza, Louisiana. September 15, 1864.
Re: Lyle has finally heard from his son who was with BGen McCook. Cyrus’ mule had played out on him before the battle and he had been left to make his own way back to Kingston, TN safely. The troops rejoiced at news that Sherman has captured Atlanta. Complains about lack of movement for the 23rd Iowa and boredom of garrison life. Brigade has been reorganized again and 23rd Iowa is now under Col. William McE Dye of the 20th Iowa (a regular officer who is a very rigid disciplinarian). Describes new provost guard procedures around the brigade. The troops are troubled by scurvy due to a lack of fresh vegetables.

Re: Gripes about camp conditions. Mentions a rumor that Gen. Davidson captured Tyler, Texas and released 2,000 Union soldiers … references to the poor treatment received by Union prisoners. Writes of the upcoming election and the political climate in the 23rd Iowa. Plans for post-war agricultural endeavors. Expresses confidence in his wife’s ability to make sound business decisions.

Re: The activities of General's Sherman, Hood and Price … the election support given the administration and the help it will be in winning the cause. Worries about his son who may be with Gen. Hugh Kilpatrick under Gen. Sherman.

Re: Sherman's march through the South … guerilla warfare in Arkansas and how they are destroying Union communications by sabotaging bridges and trains … the activity of Hood around Nashville and Memphis, Tennessee. Comments on weather and living conditions he endures and on the soil quality and abundance of wildlife in the area.

Re: The drill schedule of the soldiers while in camp … the future plans he has made upon his release from the army and his return home. Living conditions at Duvall’s Bluff – they are in cabins. Exorbitant cost of items provided by sutlers.

Re: New designation for the 23rd Iowa: 2nd Brigade, 4th Division, Mississippi River, under the command of Col. Black of the 37th Illinois Veterans. The execution of Private George B. Price of the 22nd Ohio, a young boy who had been proven to be a deserter … the economic inflation of the war that has caused an increase in prices for land, food, and animals. Instructions for his wife to sell property while prices are high and what crops to plant where.

Re: Camp life during the rainy season … personal comments concerning the rebel
cause being hopeless and the fact that there is nothing left to stop even small Union
detachments moving at will through the western area. Complains of lack of pay and
speculates as to what may have caused the stoppage.

42. Blakely, Alabama. May 5, 1865.
Re: The terrible news of the assassination of the President and attack on secretary of
state … the capture of Booth and feelings of the soldiers over the incident … the
general dissipation of military and government leadership… talk of Grant being
drunk most of the time … the surrender terms extended Gen Johnson by Gen
Sherman are not understood by the men … the surrender of Gen Dick [Richard]
Taylor to Gen. Canby and the arrangements being made for the surrender of Kirby
Smith … payment for the past ten months service, $1020.00 in back pay finally
received… the Sultana steamer disaster on the Mississippi River resulting in the death
of 1400 men. Description of his living quarters and of a social dinner with fellow
courts martial board members.

Re: Kirby Smith's refusal to surrender and how this might prolong the fighting in the
Texas area … the feelings of the southern people and the Union soldier's relations
with them … a comment that southern women would be considered "fast" by
northern standards … the feelings of the Union soldiers that the death of Lincoln was
causd primarily by the civil officers of the Confederacy and the northern
copperheads, but not by the southern people themselves.

44. Camp of the 23rd Iowa Vol. Inft., Near Mobile, Alabama. May 18, 1865
Re: The capture of Jefferson Davis by General Wilson … the rejoicing of the soldiers
at the news and their singing "we'll hang Jeff Davis from a sour apple tree" … the
parolling and transporting of prisoners to their homes. Almost exuberantly plans for
his future home and employment.

Re: Gives an account of an ammunition warehouse explosion that leveled 14 city
blocks in Mobile and over 300 dead; what he personally witnessed … his plans to sell
his Iowa home while the price of land is high and move to the West.

Re: Troop movements to Galveston … his hopes of being replaced by veterans
and being mustered out soon … Voices frustration at having worked late hours to get
musterin out rolls completed only to be told to get ready to move to Galveston.
Comments that out of the more than 1000 men that originally comprised the 23rd
Iowa only 300 are left to tell of the terrible war.

47. Camp of the 23rd Iowa Inft., Galveston, Texas. June 25, 1865.
Re: The trip by steamer from Mobile to Galveston … news of the capture and imprisonment of his son and the hope that the boy is safe and will soon be released. The 23rd Iowa is now about 375 men and about 80 of these are raw recruits.

48. Camp of the 23rd Iowa Inft., Columbus, Texas. June 26, 1865.
Re: Describes local scenery. The visitation of former slaves to the Union soldiers camp … the uneasy relations now existing between the former master and his slaves that are now free.

49. Columbus, Texas. July 2, 1865.
Re: Attendance at the burial of Limen Jorden from Company “I”. Description of the “peculiar congregation” at a Baptist Sunday service and the southern sentiments of the local preacher who had Union soldiers in the gathering. His adopting a 17 year old boy, James Henry “Jimmy” Hands from Zanesville, OH, who had been a “waiter” [valet?] for a captain of the 23rd Iowa and who had been cruelly dismissed … the feelings of the southern people toward the Union soldiers … such feelings being rude and insolent. How some planters are treating the African-Americans.

Re: His fear that his son might have been killed aboard the Sultana when it exploded … impatience to be mustered out and to quit roaming around over Texas countryside … the insolence of the people of Texas resulting from the fact that the war never actually reached them … an incident in Houston when a United States flag was torn down by citizens and the subsequent arrest of the rioters.

Re: Document certifying that all accounts and property were in order upon his discharge from the Army.

52. Mobile, Alabama. April 15, 1865.
Re: Ordnance and Stores Return Affidavit.

Letters from Mary A. (Hamilton) Garrett to her husband, Lyle A. Garrett, September 26, 1862 to July 13, 1865. A few miscellaneous letters from other family members.

Box 2
Folder:

1. Des Moines, Iowa. Saturday evening, February 21, 1863.
Re: Lyle has been gone for five months. Disgusted with the “do nothing” policy of the government. Worries for husband’s health and ability to obtain rations. States her intention to get a teaching certificate and teach to earn money and occupy her time since a business plan with Mrs. R[eicheneker] didn’t work out.

2. Des Moines, Iowa. Tuesday evening, February 24, 1863.
Re: She has heard that Gen. Davidson’s command is at Pilot Knob. Mentions that her
Aunt Liss has invited her to visit [Vermilion Co., Illinois]. Molly Hedge’s family are
bitter secessionists. She is angry about the dishonesty of the quartermasters who
short the soldiers’ rations and that the sutlers, Hull and Lyon, sell whiskey to the men.

Re: Received $43.00 that her husband sent. Capt. [Leonard B.] Houston [Co. “A”,
23rd Iowa] was in town briefly, but he left before Mary was able to speak with him.
Mrs. Bird hasn’t heard from [her son] Empson for some time. Mrs. Hull and Eliza
left for St. Louis. Instructs her husband to have his photograph taken in full uniform.
A short note from Mary L. Reicheneker, whose family Mary is staying with, on back
of letter.

Re: Exhorts her husband to keep writing in his journal. Secretary of State Dr. White
preached a sermon at the Methodist church. Discusses her prospects for getting a
school. News of friends and family.

5. Des Moines, Iowa. Tuesday evening, March 10, 1863.
Re: Describes the funeral of Charlie Hepburn which was held that afternoon at his
father’s house. The coffin was opened so that the father could view the body, but
they would not let the mother see him. Mrs. Bird is worried about Empson who is
sick in a hospital near Pilot Knob. Received a visit from a soldier named Mr.
[William] Christy, a complete stranger to her, but who had news of Lyle and other
men of the 23rd Iowa. Possibility of promotion for Lyle and her hope that he may
soon come home on leave. Prospects for getting a school. Discussion of religious
principles. Catholics to build a new church and many people who subscribed large
sums are protestant. News of friends and family. Makes reference to Copperhead
demonstrations in Detroit, Michigan.

6. At Father’s [Cottage Home, Iowa]. Thursday Even., March 19, 1863.
Re: Walked out to Smith’s district to apply for a teaching job. Lyle’s 40th birthday
[18 March] causes her to reflect on her childless state. Worries about her husband as
he is moving toward Vicksburg. News of friends and family and Mary’s dealing with
Copperhead relatives. Worries that her husband may die of illness in the camps as so
many others have or lose his life at Vicksburg. Plans for improvement on the farm.
Hope that she will be hired at the school in Smith’s district.

Re: Concern for her husband’s health as he moves south into that “sickly climate.”
Ezra Plummer has returned home and he and [Lyle’s cousin] Vinnie [Sarah Lavinia
Garrett] are going to get married. Farm matters.

8. At Austin’s [Cottage Home, Iowa]. Friday afternoon, April 10 1863. [faded, closely
written, hard to read]
Re: Weather is dry and windy to the point that wheat crop may be a failure. Soil is blown off of newly planted fields and birds eat the seeds. She has accepted a school in Robinson’s district and will begin teaching in about three weeks. News of family and friends.

9. At Mrs. Bansman’s, Des Moines, Iowa. April 16, 1863.
Re: She is in the home of Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Bansman, the anti-war, anti-Union editor of the Des Moines Times, for whom her husband has a great antipathy. It is Mary’s 23rd birthday and she reflects on whether her life has made the world a better place.

Re: Dr. Campbell and Lieut. [William E.] Houston of the 23rd Iowa have been in town. She saw Billy [William B.] Butler and his wife after a church meeting. Describes a confrontation between Copperhead and abolitionists which resulted in an unpleasant shouting match at church. Discusses Union defeat at Charleston in relation to Vicksburg. Describes an impromptu wedding in the family. Treatment of Copperheads who tried to hold a meeting in the county courthouse in Des Moines.

Re: Empson Bird has returned home unexpectedly. Bemoans the fact that mail may not pass Memphis either north or south since the river is blockaded but resolves to write anyway. She has been hired for three months at $20.00/month at Robinson’s school. Philosophizes on the culpability of all citizens for the sin of slavery. News of friends, family and farm.

12. School Room, Delaware Township, [Iowa]. Wed. Morn 8 ½ o’clock, May 6, 1863. [faded]
Re: She has begun her teaching job and has twelve students and expects a few more. News from Vicksburg and Rappahannock that Gen. Hooker succeeded in capturing 400 Rebels and that a Union boat attack on Vicksburg resulted in Rebel losses. She has not visited their farm because she dislikes Mrs. W[ickham the tenant’s wife] so very much. Comments on family she boards with. Mr. J.B. Bansman has invented a ventilation system for railway cars and has a patent for it. Talk of enlarging their church building.

13. School Room [Delaware Township, Iowa]. Wednesday May 13, 1863 [faded, hard to read in places]
Re: Her left eye bothers her. News that Richmond is in Union hands. Visit to Iowa Center where she saw her former school mate, Mary (Maxwell) Baldwin. Report of Richmond falling was false – a rumor made up by brokers in Chicago to promote speculation. Describes the adverse reactions of a local secessionist family whose daughter’s husband joined the Union army. Mentions that the first thing anyone learns about a stranger upon meeting is whether he or she is “for government.” Describes her feelings upon learning that the 23rd Iowa had been in battle.

Re: Dismissed her school early because her eyes were so sore she can hardly see. Describes her anxiety for her husband since she has not had word from him since April 23.

15. Des Moines, Iowa. Saturday morning, May 23, 1863.  
Re: Grant’s army at Jackson, Mississippi has won another battle. Her relief that her husband survived when a comrade by his side was killed in battle. Still in town with sore eyes and to hear news. Note from Lyle’s sister Emma at the end of the letter: Feelings of anxiety for his safety, description of home scene. She is teaching in Uncle John [Garrett’s] district this summer. Billy [William] Pricer’s leg is recovering and he wants to return to the regiment [23rd Iowa]. News of friends and family.

Re: 21st and 23rd Iowa were in the Battle of Black River Bridge and she is waiting for word on those killed and wounded. News that Vicksburg is in Union hands at last and Copperhead reactions. Secessionists are becoming very unpopular in town so their numbers are becoming smaller. Her eyes are still sore, but are improved. News of family.

17. Des Moines, Iowa. Tuesday evening, June 2, 1863.  
Re: Relief that her husband was spared on the 17th of May [Black River Bridge] but is now worried that he may have been with Carr’s division. Dr. Hull is bringing Albert [Capt. John A.T. Hull] home and Mrs. Hull is having a hard time at home. A Mr. Lyon who was a sutler with the army has died. Describes various emotional displays by women who have men in the army in comparison to her own. Describes in particular the actions of a Mrs. Henry Griffiths unfavorably. Her eyes are better but still not enough for her to return to her school. She is trying to get into the public schools in town and Mr. Robinson is “electioneering” for her with the school boards. News of family.

Re: Mary has returned to school even though her eyes still trouble her. Capt Hull brought her out. His leg is healing and he is anxious to return to the 23rd Iowa. Mr. Robinson is attending the Republican State Convention in Des Moines. Mary treasures her husband’s letters and predicts that “several of them will become a matter of history in a few years.” News of family. Received news that the 23rd Iowa was in a battle at Milliken’s Bend and suffered severely but Mr. Robinson assures her that Lyle was not killed or wounded after having read the casualty lists. Dr. Hull has told her that Lieut. [William H.] Downs was killed and that he was going to try to get Lyle promoted in his place. Writes of her own unpleasant relatives.

19. At Robinson’s, [Delaware Township, Iowa]. Sunday morning, June 28, 1863.  
Re: Vicksburg is still holding against the Union. Reflects on how future generations will view the originators of the war with scorn. She met a Capt. Roach at Hull’s who has been appointed enrolling officer for four local townships. She has consented to having a portion of one of Lyle’s letters written after the battle of Milliken’s Bend,
published in the Des Moines Register. Her eyes are greatly improved. Plans for the 4th of July.

Re: Describes an incident with a Copperhead sympathizer on the way into town for the 4th of July activities. Writes about several people present, including Col. J.A. Williamson and his wife, an avid secessionist. Capt Hull is engaged to a Miss Gregory, sister of Mrs. Col. Williamson and also a secessionist. News of friends and family. BGen. Crocker and Col. Williamson left on the 5th to return to the regiment. Mary doesn’t know when Capt. Hull will go back. Expresses hopes for Lyle’s promotion prospects. Her eyes are healed.

Re: Hope that Lyle’s recent leave of absence wasn’t a detriment to his chance for promotion. News of family. Cyrus is ill in a hospital in New Albany, Indiana but is recovering. His regiment [8th Iowa Cavalry] has been ordered to Chattanooga. Mary attended the Lady’s State Convention but didn’t think much of the speakers. Mentions several deaths in the community. Lyle’s farm was unexpectedly offered for sale by the sheriff for back taxes. Lyle had only paid through ’61 before he left. They owe $18.00 in back taxes and an additional $3.00 for interest and the cost of the advertisement.

Re: Capt Hull has been back a week. He recommended Lyle for promotion upon his own resignation. News of family and farm matters. All taxes due on the farm have been paid by Lyle’s father. Mary has decided to apply for a teaching job in Crawford County that pays $30/month with board. Good news of the war in the east with Union victories in Chattanooga, Rapidan River and Charleston.

Re: Death and burial of two neighbor children. Mary and family members have all been ill with colds. Reflects on the time she was able to spend with her husband when he was home on leave. Possibility that Lyle’s brother, Austin, may be drafted in January. News of family.

Re: Congratulates Lyle who has gotten his commission as a lieutenant. Indicates that the captain in Lyle’s company may have favored someone else referred to as “Little Eva” whose “other half” is home in Iowa. She instructs Lyle to get a new suit of clothes made. Cyrus’ regiment is about 30 miles from the Tennessee River. The President has called for 200,000 more men and Iowa may fill its quota without a draft.

Re: She is staying with her relatives, Mary and John Ellison. Refers to the loss of soldiers in the 69th Indiana on a pontoon that she read about in the Chicago Tribune.
Makes reference to various members of her family as being “the rankest Copperheads.” Considering trying to sell land she owns in Indiana.

Re: Irregularity of the mails in Rossville. She has more friends in Illinois than she thought. Intends to rest and visit and improve her mind by reading during the summer. Realizes that there are many loyal people in the south who are suffering because of the traitorous ones and expresses her pity for them. Anticipates trouble in the upcoming presidential election with the Rebels losing their hopes of victory. Discusses an offer on her land in Indiana.

Re: Concern that her husband may not have received word of where she is. Hopes that he will not object to her having come since she will soon have sold her “estate” in Spencer Co. [Indiana] and have some money to help settle their debts. Assures her husband that her own situation is very good compared to that of other women who don’t have the same support of friends and family that she does. The governors of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin offered President Lincoln 100,000 additional troops (20,000 from each state) for 100 days. The troops are to be paid and equipped just as the other volunteer troops, but they will receive no bounty. Speaks of the hardships the call will cause for farmers who are now just at the beginning of putting in their crops.

Re: Mary is ill and depressed. Refers to Ft. Pillow massacre [April 12, 1864 which was a confederate slaughter of African-American federal troops in Tennessee. The action stemmed from southern outrage at the north’s use of African-American soldiers] and its likely effect on the Union conduct of the war.

29. Rossville, Illinois. June 5 1864 [end portion missing]
Re: Expresses her relief that once again her husband has survived in battle at the Red River [Red River campaign under Gen Nathaniel P. Banks. Union suffered heavy casualties and a significant defeat at the Battle of Sabine Cross Roads in May 1864]. Notes that the moral depravity caused by war makes her want to doubt the integrity of the whole human family. Her Uncle Payne’s family in Danville are the most rabid Butternuts. News of other relatives.

Re: She will remain in Illinois until she has money enough to return to Iowa. Has had enough of her Copperhead relatives. News from family in Iowa. War news and the capture of Gen Stoneman and 1,000 of his troops. Copperhead sentiments among the local ladies. Mentions the possibility of adopting a war orphan.

Re: Concern for her husband’s health. Exhorts him to “procure such vegetables as will induce a healthy action of the bowels.” Arms were seized in Indianapolis from
Hoosier Tories. Rebels made a raid into southern Illinois. If there is a draft, the Copperheads will most likely fight it. News from Iowa family.

Re: Six weeks since she has received news from Lyle. Visit to a family member was uncomfortable. She intends to return to Iowa soon but wants to wait long enough to take apples with her.

Re: Atlanta has fallen and all forts of importance in Mobile Bay are in Union possession. She is now making her farewell visits and expect to start home the next week. News of the capture of the 8th Iowa Cavalry, but no news from Cyrus. Her antipathy for Copperheads is growing and is probably enhanced by her “sesesh” relatives. Land prices increasing. Prices of farm-raised goods.

34. Cottage Home, Iowa. September 26, 1864.
Re: Long description of trip home to Iowa. Multiple delays when changing trains. Train schedules are unpredictable due to war. News of family. Concern that Cy is imprisoned with his regiment.

Re: Went to a lecture on the “Orphans’ Home,” an enterprise to house and educate the orphans of Iowa soldiers. Mary subscribed $5.00 for the effort. She is anxious since it has been so long since she has heard from Lyle. October 13 was the 6th anniversary of their wedding [m. October 13, 1858 in Iowa]. News of family. Another report of Rebels in Iowa and that they burned the town of Albia and a force of 500-800 is marching toward Des Moines.

36. Cottage Home, Iowa. Tuesday evening, October 18, 1864.
Re: Rebel scare in Iowa when Gen [Stirling] Price had crossed the Missouri River and was headed north. Six militia companies met in Des Moines with Jack Williamson as Col. and Harry Griffiths captain of the light artillery. Reaction of local people to the alert. News of family and farm. Only eleven more months before Lyle’s 3-year enlistment is over.

37. Cottage Home, Iowa. Saturday morning, October 22, 1864.
Re: John Sherman of Ohio is to speak in Des Moines. Family news.

38. Cottage Home, Iowa. Sabbath afternoon, 3 o’clock, October 23, 1864.
Re: [Mr.] Braden of Indianapolis has offered $75 for Mary’s land in Spencer Co. [Indiana] and a quit claim deed which she thinks she should accept. Makes reference to trouble in the 23rd Iowa and of Lyle’s having opposed those in authority sometime between Sept. 25 and Oct. 2. News of family. Land prices in Iowa. Dry weather has caused wells to fail and the springs on their farm cause it to be attractive to buyers.

Re: She has hardly the patience to wait the ten months until Lyle returns. They have new renters on their farm who are an improvement on the Wickhams. Farm and livestock news. Church news. Describes a grand rally of “peace men” [Copperheads] as a grand failure since the only demonstration she saw in Des Moines was a rather more than average number of “free voters” around the saloons… and “hoopless wimmen” around the copperhead dry goods stores. Expects trouble at election time. Recounts an incident with Copperheads that occurred as they were returning home from town. Discusses merits of local political candidates. High prices of goods. News of friends and family.


Re: Concern for her husband’s health. Election results. Farm news and money concerns. Six or seven Rebel guerillas were captured in Decatur Co. [Iowa] and are jailed in Des Moines.

42. Cottage Home, Iowa. Sabbath morning, December 18, 1864. 
Re: Concern for her husband’s health. Hope that the rebellion is using its last resources and will soon collapse. Efforts of southern sympathizers in the north to raise support for their cause and a bomb plot in New York City exposed. Describes general political climate, north and south. Prospect for selling some land and timber. Capt. Roach is in Nashville acting as the Iowa state sanitary agent for the troops. She has written to ask him to get in touch with Cyrus if he can.

43. Cottage Home, Iowa. Friday afternoon, December 30, 1864. 
Re: Continuing anxiety for Lyle’s health. Indicates that Lyle’s father has sold his farm and that she will soon move to a new location. War news. Cyrus wrote home but a hard battle took place in Nashville shortly after that and the 8th Iowa Cavalry may have been engaged. News of family and friends and social occasions. Real estate matters.

44. Cottage Home, Iowa. Friday afternoon, January 6, 1865. 
Re: Anxiety for her husband’s health. Family plans to move off the farm in March and where they are going. Description of a fund-raising dinner for relief of soldier’s families. Misappropriation of support funds by a local township trustee and reaction of community. Mary Dean Garrett, Lyle’s mother, is 64 today. Stuart [William Stuart Garrett], Lyle’s brother, has also sold his farm. A former schoolmate of Mary’s, Charles Black, may be a colonel in the 37th Illinois Infantry that Lyle has mentioned.

45. Des Moines, Iowa. Sabbath afternoon, January 29, 1865.
Re: Disappointment that Lyle’s regiment is moving further south, just north of New Orleans. Plans for where she will stay once the family moves off of the farm. Mentions several family members and friends who are willing to give her board. Real estate matters. Capt. Roach has had no news of Cyrus. Mentions taking a child, Ida [her niece, Ida F. Bilsland] to keep for her own.

Re: Plans to teach after she moves off the farm in the spring. The Roaches visited for dinner. Only seven more months before Lyle’s enlistment is up. Gen. Sherman has taken Charleston and Ft. Sumter. Cannons were fired in town to celebrate. Oil discovered in Iowa. Local farmers are leasing land to eastern oil companies.

47. Cottage Home, Iowa. Friday, March 3, 1865.
Re: The family has finally heard from Cyrus – he is safe and well. Prices received for horses sold at auction. Stuart is moving to Nevada [Story Co., Iowa] with his family. Plans for the future. More talk of petroleum finds in Iowa. There will be a great jubilee across the north on March 14, President Lincoln’s inaugural day.

48. Cottage Home, Iowa. Sabbath afternoon, March 5, 1865.
Re: Indicates that her relations with Mary and Jester Hedge are not overly cordial. Threatening winter weather has hastened Stuart’s move to Nevada. Several bridges are unstable due to high water. Real estate and farm matters.

49. Cottage Home, Iowa. Monday afternoon, March 27, 1865.
Re: She is going to Barlow’s district to apply for a teaching position. Worry for Lyle’s safety. [David] Ellison has been promoted to captain in Co. “F” 3rd U.S. Vols. and has been sent to Leavenworth, Kansas. Lyle’s sister, Libbie, writes recommending the area around Kansas City as a desirable place to live. Concern about the lack of pay in the Iowa regiments. A society was organized to support an Iowa Orphans’ Home, but keeping up the interest in the project is difficult. Real estate matters in relations to oil prospects and railway easements. Brother Nash intends to resign in order to manage the financial affairs of the college in Des Moines.

50. Cottage Home, Iowa. Sabbath morning, April 9, 1865.
Re: Final preparations to leave the farm. Describes family scene on the farm. News of the surrender of Richmond was cause for a huge celebration in town. News of family and livestock. Housekeeping plans for when Lyle returns.

51. Oakwood, Iowa. Sabbath morning, April 16, 1865.
Re: News of the assassination of President Lincoln and the attack on Secretary of State Seward. Describes her personal reaction.

52. Cottage Home, Iowa. Sabbath evening, April 16, 1865.
Re: Describes the scenes from the funeral exercises that were held in the court house in Des Moines to honor President Lincoln. She lists the speakers and their topics.
Rain and bad roads prevented the final removal from the farm as planned, but they are to leave the next day. The new owner is being most unpleasant to the family.

Re: Describes the circumstances of her employment in Barlow’s district and that she will be living with Lyle’s brother Austin. News that Sec. Seward’s attacker has been caught and the names of the conspirators discovered. Plans to take a trip in the fall with just her husband.

54. School Room, 4 ½ p.m., Wednesday, May 10, 1865.
Re: Only four more months left in Lyle’s enlistment and troops are beginning to be mustered out as the war comes to an end. She enjoys her school and is boarding with a local family. News that Gen. Canby’s army will soon be mustered out.

55. Nevada, [Story Co., Iowa]. Saturday 2 ½ o’clock, May 27, 1865.
Re: Lyle’s mother is dangerously ill and seems close to death. Various family members have come to see her. Hope that Lyle will soon be home, but she has had word that the 23rd Iowa is to go to Texas.

56. Oakwood, Iowa. Sabbath evening, June 11, 1865.
Re: Intends to continue teaching until Lyle comes home. The debt to Austin is paid off and they only owe about $210 to Stuart and to Lyle’s father. Lyle’s mother’s health is improving rapidly. Brother Nash, long-time pastor of their Baptist church, has resigned and the congregation has a new minister on trial from Rochester, New York.

57. Card from the First Baptist Church, Corner of 8th and May Streets, Kansas City [MO] with “Mrs. Mary A. Garrett” penciled on it.

58. Home, Polk Co., Iowa. March 20, 1863
E. C. [Elizabeth Catherine Garrett] Ellison to her brother, Lyle A. Garrett
Re: Family all well except father, who is improving. [David] Ellison’s regiment [6th Iowa Cavalry] is ordered to Sioux City and may go to Ft. Randall in summer.

59. Four Mile, [Iowa]. July 17, 1863.
Re: News of family members and their health. Farm news. Reports local reaction to news of the fall of Vicksburg. Local politics and relative merits of gubernatorial candidates. Reports the death of a local farmer in a reaper accident.

60. Cottage Home, Iowa. October 21, 1864.
Martha Emily Garrett [Lyle’s sister Emma] to Lyle A. Garrett.
Re: Family in good health. Describes winter provisions. A fellow soldier is home on sick leave and is slowly recovering from his wound. News of various family members and where they are.
Cyrus W. Garrett [Lyle’s son] to Lyle A. Garrett.
Re: He has been in the hospital since the 12th of December. He was thrown from his horse at Franklin, Tennessee and “ruptured himself.” He was in various hospitals while he recovered but is now going back on duty. The men in his regiment think their colonel is a “poor stick.”

62. Maple Farm, Kansas. May 24, 1888.
Mary A. Garrett to William Garrett [Lyle’s father]
Re: Concern for his health. Neighbors are asking after him. News of livestock and farm produce. Prices received for dairy products from the farm. Letter enclosed from his granddaughter, Edna:

Ferndale, California. 13 May 1888. (faded)
Edna [Dean Garrett, daughter of Austin Garrett, Lyle’s brother] to William Garrett.
Re: She is teaching school and hardly has time for other things. Describes spring weather. News of family. Edna is to get her own pony now that she has to get to her school. She has been borrowing her sister’s buggy horse, but her sister will need it soon.

Re: News of family. Weather report on the past winter and local climate in comparison to that of southern California. Farming concerns and prices for produce and livestock. Comment from Austin’s wife, Hattie, at the end notes that the Democrats are using the “Demi Pop” literature to get their candidates into office and that the Kansas voters ought to see it.

64. Two calling cards: Mrs. James A. Campbell. Mrs. Mary A. Garrett. On the back of Mary Garrett’s card is a hand-written note indicating that it was once attached to a chain of some sort. It reads: This chain was made while in camp during the Civil War by a soldier in the 23rd Iowa Vol. Inft. and was worn for 35 yrs by L. A. Garrett. There is a small amount of black cord looped through a hole in the card in the upper left corner.
# Garrett Family

William GARRETT  
b. March 3, 1799 in Abbeyville, South Carolina  
m. June 24, 1822 in South Salem, Ross Co., Ohio  
d. April 24, 1890 in Kansas City, Missouri  
buried in Union Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri

Mary DEAN  
b. 1801 in Ohio  
d. July 7, 1881 in Kansas City, Missouri  
buried in Union Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri

## Children:

1. **Lyle Abraham GARRETT**  
   Martha Ann PATTERSON  
   Elenor Blain STUART  
   Mary A. HAMILTON  
   b. March 18, 1823 in Highland County, Ohio  
   m. June 1, 1843 in Highland County, Ohio  
   m. November 5, 1845 in Highland County, Ohio  
   m. October 13, 1858 in Iowa

2. **William Stuart GARRETT**  
   Jennie HAWTHORNE  
   b. February 15, 1825 in Highland County, Ohio  
   m. September 12, 1931 in Grinnell, Iowa

3. **Margaret Alvira GARRETT**  
   b. March 15, 1827 in Highland County, Ohio

4. **James Austin GARRETT**  
   Harriet LAMB  
   b. February 2, 1829 in Highland County, Ohio  
   m. March 28, 1861 in Polk Co., Iowa

5. **Sarah Amanda GARRETT**  
   b. November 1, 1830 in Highland County, Ohio

6. **Rebecca Caroline GARRETT**  
   b. September 20, 1833 in Highland County, Ohio

7. **Mary Jane GARRETT**  
   Marion (HOWARD?)  
   b. June 16, 1834 in Highland County, Ohio

8. **Elizabeth Catherine GARRETT**  
   David ELLISON  
   b. February 24, 1836 in Highland County, Ohio

9. **Martha Emily GARRETT**  
   b. 1841 in Highland County, Ohio  
   d. August 22, 1876 in Kansas City, Missouri  
   buried in Union Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri

10. **Layton W. GARRETT**  
    b. 1843 in Highland County, Ohio