

# THE SHERMAN LETTERS

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# Introduction

- Shortly after beginning the work on her father's papers for publication, Racheal Sherman found a series of letters which interested her. Those letters were wrote during a period expanding from 1837 to 1891. These letters showed the total correspondence between her father, William Sherman, and her Uncle, John Sherman. These letters were exchanged by two brothers of fame. These letters were during some of the most controversial moments in American history.



# Letter 1

*Dear Brother:* In compliance with your request I sent you a paper shortly after the reception of your letter, which I should have answered much sooner had I not been till within a few days past under the impression that it had been done. This excuse is sufficient, I suppose, for my long delay, especially as a letter from me is not very desirable. I hope that you still have as favorable opinions as ever with respect to your employment, for in my opinion a man's success in his profession depends upon the impressions he receives at the beginning; for if these are favorable, most undoubtedly he will endeavor to succeed, and success will be the necessary consequence. You have now been engaged at that employment about a year and must be by this time quite an expert engineer. I would not be much astonished if when I came home I would find you superintendent of some public work. I have not received many letters from home lately; in fact, I am almost too busy to write many, and if I do not answer all their letters immediately upon their reception, they follow my example apparently, which is the cause of it, I presume; but after our examination in January I will endeavor to be a little more punctual and

# Letter 1 Continued

expect the same of my correspondents. At present we are very much engaged in preparing for the examination which takes place immediately after Christmas. I think I will still have about the same standing as I have now in Mathematics and French, but in Drawing I think I will be among the first five. Preparation for the Christmas spree is now all the go. I have joined in with about a dozen others and laid the foundation for a very good dinner costing about three dollars apiece. I wish we could get a hold of some of our western turkeys, chickens, and the like, which cannot be obtained here except at an enormous price, and as money is something to us like teeth, we are obliged to go without. Winter seems to be very reluctant about setting in. The weather at present is more like spring than winter. This time last winter, the river was closed, and we had fine skating, but no doubt it will soon set in with a vengeance, giving us our full share of north winds, which it generally deals out very liberally to the inhabitants of the Highlands. It is now about halfpast nine, and we are obliged to go to bed at ten. You must, therefore, allow me to come to a conclusion, wishing you at the same time to give my best love to all the family when you next write home. Do not fail to write soon.

Your affectionate brother,

W. T. SHERMAN.

# Who Sherman Was

- William Tecumseh Sherman wrote this letter to his brother, John Sherman. William T. Sherman was born in 1820. His father unexpectedly died in 1829. Then in 1836, at just the age of 16, William T. Sherman entered West Point as a cadet. He was appointed from his native state of Ohio. Upon graduation in 1840, Sherman entered the Army as a second lieutenant in the 3rd U.S. Artillery and saw action in Florida in the Second Seminole War against the Seminole tribe. He was later stationed in Georgia and South Carolina. He was one of the only high ranking officers to not serve in Mexico. In 1859, Sherman accepted a job as the first superintendent of the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning & Military Academy in Pineville. In January 1861, as more Southern states were seceding from the Union, Sherman was required to accept receipt of arms surrendered to the State Militia by the U.S. Arsenal at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Instead of complying, he resigned his position as superintendent and returned to the North, declaring to the governor of Louisiana.



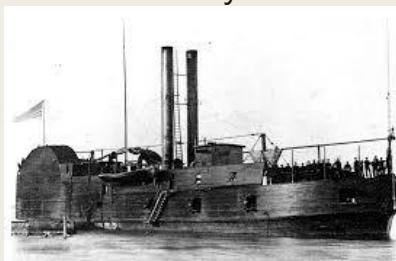
# Who Sherman Was

- Sherman began his Civil War career serving in the First Battle of Bull Run and Kentucky in 1861. He served under General Ulysses S. Grant in 1862 and 1863 during the battles of Forts Henry and Donelson, the Battle of Shiloh, the campaigns that led to the fall of the Confederate stronghold of Vicksburg on the Mississippi River, and the Chattanooga Campaign, which culminated with the routing of the Confederate armies in the state of Tennessee. In 1864, Sherman succeeded Grant as the Union commander in the Western Theater of the war. He proceeded to lead his troops to the capture of the city of Atlanta, a military success that contributed to the re-election of Abraham Lincoln. Sherman's subsequent march through Georgia and the Carolinas further undermined the Confederacy's ability to continue fighting. He accepted the surrender of all the Confederate armies in the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida in April 1865, after having been present at most major military engagements in the Western Theater.



# What this letter was about

- This letter was wrote to his brother, John Sherman. John Sherman was a republican representative, that ran for office three times.
- The letter was wrote Dec. 6, 1837. In December of that year Canadian militia destroyed Caroline, a US steamboat docked at Buffalo. It was called the Caroline Affair. The Caroline Affair was a diplomatic crisis beginning in 1837 involving the United States, Britain, and the Canadian independence movement. It began in 1837 when William Lyon Mackenzie and other Canadian rebels, commanding the ship Caroline, fled to an island in the Niagara River, with support from nearby American citizens. British forces then boarded the ship, killed an American crew member in the fighting, and then burned the ship and sent it over Niagara Falls. This was very local because William was in New York at the time, this was also very national news because tensions raised between the two countries.
- Yes there was several examples of bias in the letter one of the examples was “for in my opinion a man's success in his profession depends upon the impressions he receives at the beginning; for if these are favorable, most undoubtedly he will endeavor to succeed, and success will be the necessary consequence”.



# Questions

- Why do you think William cares about his brothers employment so much?
- Why do you think he was obligated to go to bed at ten?

# Letter 2

WEST POINT, N.Y., Oct. 15, 1838.

*Dear Brother:*

..... I suppose that by this time you have become quite an expert engineer, -- much better acquainted with "Jacob staffs," chains, compasses, etc., than you used to be with Euclid and Virgil; and I hope to hear from you soon that you have become highly pleased with your occupation..

..... I presume that you will not be able to work all winter, on account of the cold, and during this time no doubt

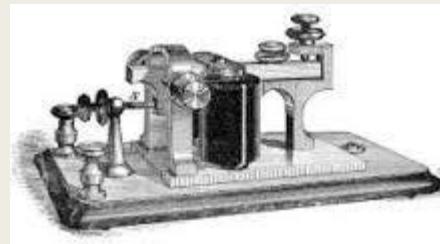
you will go home; and if you are detained there by the weather, which will probably be the case, I would advise you to continue your study of the mathematics or whatever else may be connected with your business. You must write to me soon, and tell me all about your campaign or trip, and what particular office you fill in the company, etc., etc. Excuse the shortness of this.

Your affectionate brother,

W. T. SHERMAN

# What the letter was about

- The author was William Sherman.
- The intended audience was his brother.
- He is still at West Point
- Jan 11 1st public demonstration of telegraph message sent using dots & dashes at Speedwell Ironworks, Morristown, New Jersey by Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail
- Yes there is bias because he said, "I suppose that by this time you have become quite an expert engineer, -- much better acquainted with "Jacob staffs," chains, compasses, etc., than you used to be with Euclid and Virgil;" he showed bias towards the new engineer that is brother is working for.



# Questions

- Why is William so obsessed with his brother's job?
- Why do you think this letter is so short?

# Letter 3

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE CUMBERLAND,  
LOUISVILLE, KEN., Oct. 26, 1861.

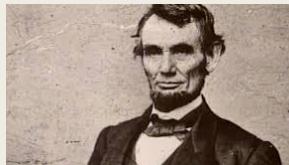
*Dear Brother:* I am just in receipt of your letter and am glad the Secretary remembered my remark, that to accomplish the only purposes for which Kentucky can be used there should be a force here of 200,000 men. My force is ridiculously small and I think to [augment] it by driblets. Look at the fact -- we know the South is alarms and prepared and must have Kentucky; for it they will struggle. They see us undervaluing their force. They have already invaded the state with five times my forces and are gradually preparing for an onset. I know their leaders and their designs, and feel that I am to be sacrificed. The Western part of the state is now in their possession. They have about 6000 men in the Valley of the Big Sandy, 6000 or 7000 at Cumberland Gap and Ford, and I doubt not at least 35,000 in front of me, with nothing between us but Green River, now fordable, and about 23 miles of intervening country. Indiana is devoid of arms, so is Ohio and the NorthWest, and to my crying demand for arms they send me a few hundreds of condemned European muskets, whilst the people ask for rifles. We have called on the Kentuckians to form regiments and they are

responding slowly to be sure but when they come for arms I can only answer I have none, or such as they won't touch. I tell you, and warn you of the danger so far as my power goes. I cannot promise to prevent the enemy reaching the Ohio river at a hundred different points. Our camps are full of their spies and the people here all prefer their Southern connections. . . . I am compelled to distribute them [troops] on three weak lines all dependent on railroads which may at any moment be interrupted, also on telegraphs which are daily cut . A reverse to any one of these might be fatal to all, yet I cannot do otherwise. The forces up Sandy must be driven or threatened from the direction of Paris. Those at Cumberland Gap from Dick Robinson, and those over Green River from here; this is the most important point and the most in danger. The Southern army wants it with its mills, foundries, shops, and all the affairs of a city, besides the control of the river. . . . Yours,

W. T. SHERMAN

# What this letter was about

- William Sherman wrote this letter
- He wrote the letter to his brother
- He thinks his force is ridiculously small, and he is fussing over it. He knows that the south needs Kentucky so he wants a bigger force. The south had already invade with a force five times the size of his. Also on October, 8 General William Sherman replaces General Robert Anderson as commander of the Department of the Cumberland. This happened because Anderson had suffered a severe mental breakdown.
- In January, President-elect of the United States, Abraham Lincoln declared slavery in Confederate states unlawful, sparking issues that would help start the Civil War.
- Yes, there is bias because he thinks that he should have a larger force of men. So he is biased towards himself.



# Questions

- Why do you think William has so much trust in his army?
- Do you think the south will take over Kentucky?