

William B. Powell Correspondence and Gravestone Language Transcription

(These letters and parts of letters written by William B. Powell from Missouri to his brother Henry A. Powell in North Carolina were copied from the originals by Mary (Powell) Greenfield, a descendant of the latter. They came to me, Elvin Meyers, from Juanita {Teter} Schwenk of Excello, Missouri. The originals are part of the Western Historical Manuscript Collection- Columbia, 23 Ellis Library, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.)

January the 1-1839 Huntsville Randolph County State of Missouri

Dear brother,

I take my pen in hand to inform you that we are all well at present thank God for it We hope when these lines come to hand they will find you in the same state of health We all got home the 16 day of December We was 56 days on the road. We have bought corn at one dollar meete at three dollars We have laid in our years pervision at them prices your father ses he is well pleased with this Country he ses the beautifulest and richest he ever saw he ses also it is the greatest Country for Corn Tobacco and hogs Cows and horses that Ever was known he is satisfied fully with it father and mother and all the rest of us sends our best love respects to you Nancy all the Children and to sister Polly James Harralson and all their Children and if we never see non of you in this world may the God of all Grace help us meete you in a better World than this Barzillia is well pleased with the Country he ses he has bin working poor land all of his days but now he is don working of poor land We saw one thousand Indians that we come on in one gang the mormons tried to take this Country but our voluntears give them what they ask (The rest of this letter was destroyed.)

July 1st, 1839 Missouri.....Randolph County

Dear Brother,

I now embrace the oppportunity of writing you a few lines to inform you that we are all well. I hope when these lines come to hand they will find you and your family all well. I received your letter on the first March which gave us all great satisfaction to hear that you was all well. But was sorry to hear of the deaths. We all hope when these lines comes to hand they will find James Harrillson and his family all well. We are all joined in sending our love and respects to you and to Nancy and all the children. Dear Brother we all like the country better and better. Give Aunt Polly our respects. Tell Aunt Polly Howdy for us all.

We cleared 20 acres of land. Dear brother this is the finest country that ever was. There is no doubt of it the range is so good. I can't describe hardly how it is. We don't want it any better than it is. We never have heard from Brother John yet. Negros are worth from eight to twelve hundred dollars. I can't perceive that this country is so much colder than it is

there. The production is corn, tobacco, wheat, oats and potatoes. Corn is one dollar per bushel. Wheat one dollar per bushel. Tobacco are from six to seven dollars per hundred weight. Bacon is six dollars per hundred weight. This country is not got as many good springs as that we have. We got well water here. We do very well with the water. Father has bought 240 acres of land. He gave one thousand dollars for it. It has good water on it as ever you drank. My father says we would not give it for ten thousand acres of the best land in Caswell for him to live on. It lays 12 or 13 miles northwest of Huntsville. The soil are generally from one foot to 20 inches deep and many places three and four foot deep. It is all upland. You never like anything in your life as well as your father likes this country.

William Powell

(Since it has no heading this must be just a part of a letter, evidently written about mid-July 1839. - M.K.G.)

Land are worth five dollars generally. Land are different prices from 1.25 to twenty five dollars per acre. The old man has bought two cows and calf for thirty dollars, forty head of hogs for fifty dollars. The gray mare has got the finest colt I ever saw in my life. Siller has got a fine bay it came on the 3rd of February. Dear brother George Price in Danville owes father twenty one dollars and twenty five cents. Father says he wants you to apply to him for it and if he don't pay it to you, you must write your father about it.

Your father says he will send you a power of attorney so you can make him pay for it, for he says it is just. Dear brother as to myself I like the country first rate. We dont want the land any richer as it is rich enough. Barzillia is the best pleased with the country of all men I ever saw in my life. There are all sorts of game. We have killed 6 deer, the first one father killed he shot it running and he was the proudest man you ever saw. We killed 12 wild geese, he killed 5 at one shot and forty wild ducks. Tell Cousin Elijah Roberts and Uncle Levin the gospel is preached here as well as there. We are in a Christian Country, thank God. We have a meeting here in six miles of us. Its now on and the preachers have been a preaching at this meeting now for ten days and it still continues. More than 100 had got converted at the meeting. Your father has not drank one drop of any kind of spirits since we landed at Huntsville, he took a little three times while we was on the road but never have drank any since. He likes the country so well and there are so many things here that gain his attention so he never thinks about drinking, he is almost always after the game. Your father says he would be glad if you and James Harrilson would come to this country. He sends you his love and respects.

Father says you must tell James Harrilson that he has bought the purtiest piece of land he ever saw in his life. Your mother sends her best love and respects to you and to Nancy and all the children. She sends her best love and respects to Sister Polly and her family. She wants her best love and respects remembered to Aunt Polly and to all inquiring friends. Tell John Henderson his kin are all well. We have had the wetest time here that ever was known. It has rained most everyday for six weeks. It commenced on the 25th of

May and has held on till this time. Crops looks tolerably well considering the season. I want you to write how the season is there. I understand Thomas Kennin is married. I never understood who he married. Tell Thomas Ray and Thomas Ware to come on to this country without hesitating any longer for it is the best country any man can move to. Mother would be satisfied if you and sister Polly was here. We have enough tobacco for seven hogsheads and corn enough for two hundred barrels of corn. We got seven acre in oats. Tell John Henderson we work his plantation well for him. Dear Brother I remember to you and to Sister Polly and Nance and to James Harrilson and all your children my best love and compliments, if I never see none of you in this world, Eternity is ours. Give all of our respects to Robert Lyon and his family and Aunt Patsy Washington and Fanny and Julia, give them our love and respects. Tell Uncle Charles and Julia to come on I will meet them at Bolcondo. Uncle Charles here are my compliments to you. Come Uncle Charles without fail to this country. A friendly farewell to you all.

William Powell

Huntsville, Randolph County, Missouri, September 15th, 1839

Dear Brother,

I again take the opportunity of writing you a few lines to inform you that we are all well at this time. Hoping when these lines come to hand they will find you and your family well. I received your letter on the last of July. I was expecting to hear good news, but it was to the contrary. I could not read the letter for crying. Father and Mother both cried all the time I was reading it. I never was so shocked in my life, but when I got to the lines that told us that Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was with her, it relieved me, Dear brother. Dont grieve after her no more than you can help for she has made a happy exchange. It is well with her, and oh that it may be well with all of us. Your Mother says take good care of them poor little motherless children and do not leave them by themselves no more than you can help. Dear Brother, your father says you never knowed what trouble was before. Dear Brother, we dont know what to write you to console you. Your Father says he wishes you were in reach of him so he could visit you and help you of distress as much as he could.

William Powell

Dear Brother,

When I think I never shall see and meet with poor Nancy in the world it makes me feel sorrow, but Thank God, we shall meet her in eternity. Your mother sends her best love to you and all the children. She says tell Aunt Polly and give Aunt Polly her best love and respects.

We all send our best respects to all inquiring friends. We have no desire to like this country any better than we do. I dont know as I can tell you any more about the country than I have already told you. We have made about ten thousand weight of tobacco and one hundred and fifty barrels of corn and nine fine large oat stacks. We have made a very good crop considering our plantation was small. You must be sure to write me a letter by Mr. Kitchen when he returns back to this country, and write me all the news in that old country. Fail not to write when you are coming to this country. Write how you and your poor little children are coming on.

Dear brother, I understand that James Philips and John Philips are both hung, and Fan Philips playing the devil, as she always done.

We have killed 15 deer, the last one the old man killed in 100 yards of Barzillia's house. It weighed 200 pounds. This is the country for me. We are done cutting tobacco.

I want you to give Uncle Charlie Powell my compliments, tell him I want him to come to this country to see us.

Dear Brother, I want you to take this receipt and present it to Mr. James Gunn and William Boon, tell them to pay you, they never paid me for it. Send it to me by Moses Kitchen. Dont fail to send me a letter by Mr. Kitchen. Give Julia Lyon my respects. Tell her I have found the girl whom I expect to marry. She is the handsomest girl I ever saw in my life. I am going to marry in some short time, for the corting is all done, marrying are next.

Dear Brother, I now come to close by saying farewell, farewell. If I never meet you in this world I hope I shall meet you in the fair world on high. Here is a pair of shestrings for you. Mother sends them to you. Dear Brother if I never meet you in this world I shall meet you in a better world than this, so brother finally farewell. I am your loving brother until death.

William Powell to Henry A. Powell, Yanceyville, N. C.
January 28th, 1840, Huntsville, Missouri

Dear Brother:

I am compelled in the commencement of my letter to inform you of a dreadful circumstance. Our poor negro Mose has got killed. He was killed on Thursday before Christmas. The man that hired him made him haul stock, made him load by himself. Poor Mose was trying to load and the stock rolled on him and killed him. He never knew what hurt him. The log was about three feet through. I never saw a parsel of people worse hurt and grieved in my life. Your father was most grieven to death for Mose was always his chois negro. He would not had this to happen, not for fifty times his value. Poor negro. I was hurt as bad as I could be. We are now going to commence suing for him. The lawyer says we can make him pay for him. Dear brother, the rest of us all are well. We all

hope when these lines comes to hand they will find you and your little children all well. I received your letter by Mr. Kitchen. It gave us great pleasure to hear you was all well. We was sorry to hear old John Poteate's case. Write us whether the governor took old John Poteate out of jail or not. Dear brother Moses Kitchen told me what you told him. Brother, I cant come the road is so long and you are uncertain about coming to this country. I cant travel twelve hundred miles on uncertainties but if you will get James Harrilson and Sister Polly in the notion of coming to Missouri, I will come and help you both out to this country. Your mother sends her best respects to you and your children. Your mother says to you and James Harrilson and Polly, Come to Missouri. Dear Brother we all say to you if you can fetch Aunt Polly be sure to fetch her. Tell Sister Polly I received her letter the 20th of this month, which gave us great satisfaction to hear that she and her little children was all well. We hope James Harrilson has got well in this time. Tell Old Mrs. Harrilson her poor little Henderson stayed with us three or four days and he is a small man but he has got a good resolution. We have sold our crop of tobacco for 4 dollars per hundred weight. We want to know what parted Barte Scott and his wife. Henderson told us they was parted. Me and my father are going to live on the land my father bought. Dear Brother, when you receive this letter write again, fail not, your father says you and James Harrilson must come on to this country for you are obliged to like the country for he is well pleased with the country as he could be. Your father and mother sends their best respects to you and your children and to Aunt Polly and to Sister Polly and her children and to James Harrilson they say come on to Missouri. I say you must tell Uncle Charles I havent forgot him yet. Tell him to come to Missouri. I shall be glad to see him in this country, your father says he is done hiring out negroes for he never will forget his poor boy Mose as long as he lives. Your father says tell everybody "Howdy" for him in Caswell. Finally brother and sister farewell forever. Tell James Harrilson and Polly, little Henderson said the night he stayed at our house he wished that James and Polly would move where he was now.

Poor little Mose giting killed grieved and hurt me so bad I did not know what to do if he had sicned and died it would not ben half as bad.

William Powell

November 10th, 1840, Huntsville, Randolph County, State of Missouri

Dear brother,

I now avail myself of the present opportunity to write you a few lines to let you know that we are all well at the time, hoping when these few lines come to hand they will find you and your family all enjoying the same blessing. I received your letter on the 24th day of October. It gave us great satisfaction to hear that you was all well Dear brother you complain of my not writing to you. I have answered every letter you wrote me. My letters surely gets lost. All I ever wrote to you about this country was so. We all liked the country as well as could wish. If you knew as much about Missouri as I do you would leave them poor old worn out ridges and come forthwith to Missouri. If you ever come to

this country fetch gold and silver and Virginia Bank notes of the State Bank of Virginia. You must get a good strong four horse wagon. I charge you now to start on 20th of September. Dont forget to start to this country at that time. Get you a good cutting machine, fetch with you. They are very useful here. Dear Brother I advise you to bring with you all necessary farming tools for they are very high in this country. There is the finest crops in this country I ever saw in my life. Your father says he dont want to live in no better a country than this. We have made twenty five thousand pounds of tobacco. Father is offered one thousand dollars for his tobacco. He wants to take it. We made about three hundred barrels of corn, ten thousand pounds of oats. Corn is one dollar a barrel. Pork is 3 dollars per hundred weight. Tobacco is worth from four to five dollars per hundred weight. This is the finest country I ever saw in my life. Brother Barzillia has rented two hundred and forty acres of land in two miles of fathers and it is first rate. Father and mother sends their best love and respects to you and wife and your poor little children. Mother is always thinking about you and sister Polly. She says she dreams about you and sister Polly most every night of her life. Brother here is my respects to you. Dear Brother the news you heard about Jack was all a lie. I want to know how you heard it. Father is a true Democrat and so is myself and Barzillia. This state gives Martin Van Buren a large majority of about 8 thousand votes. Father has never drank a drop of no kind of licker since we came to this country. He takes up all of his time in hunting for deer. He killed lots and lots of deer. We always have plenty of venison in the house. We was all gone from home on the first of this month but father and mother. Father shot down a very large buck and hollered for help. Mother run to help him, one of the neighbors run and when he got there father had a hold of the hind legs, mother had a hold of the horns and there they had to stand and hold to the deer until the neighbor got there and cut its throat. Fathers lawsuit was laid over until the next term of court. It comes on again on the 20th of January. Mr. Moses Kitchen and oldest daughter are both dead. They died with a fever. Thomas Gunn lost three negroes with the same fever. Dear brother remember our love and respects to all of Sister Polly's. We all want to see them very bad indeed. I am your loving brother
until death.

William Powell

William B. and Nancy A. (Banning) Powell share the same tombstone. On the north side above her name and dates is carved the following:

"Farewell dear Mother, sweet thy rest
Weary with years and worn with pain
Farewell till in some happy place
We shall behold thy face again
A precious one from us has gone
A voice we loved is stilled
A place is vacant in our home
Which never can be filled."

Below her name is carved:

"She said she knew her feet would walk with Jesus."

On the south side above his name and dates is carved the following:

"We miss thee From Our Home Dear father

We miss thee from thy place

A shadow over our life is cast

We miss the sunshine of thy face

We miss thy kind and willing hand

Thy fond and earnest care

Our home is dark without thee

We miss thee everywhere."