

GRAVES

Property of
Miss Emma Bell
Stacy, Reids 1

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EGYPTIAN CORN FOR GEORGIA



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"Egyptian Corn for Georgia" is Dr. Wm. P. Hesseltine's description and evaluation of the letters of Charles Iverson Graves which he sent to Dr. Coulter head of History Department, University of Georgia. See Page I for reply and Page II for Dr. Hesseltine's letter to me. Margaruite B. Graves.

EGYPTIAN CORN FOR GEORGIA

The Letter of Charles Iverson Graves, Sailor, Soldier, Planter and Engineer. 'I am going to Egypt' said Charles Iverson Graves in 1875 'for the same reason that Joseph's brothers went to Egypt: To get Corn for my family'.

For the next three years Graves served as a lieutenant-colonel in the Army of the Khedive of Egypt. To his wife "Chichi" (Margaret Lea Graves) he wrote, in these three years, 302 letters detailing his experience in Egypt, and winding up with his departure, after significant and highly important service, with \$5000 in Gold which he brought back to Rome, Georgia, to clear off the mortgage on his farm and establish himself as a planter.

In two respects, the letters of Charles Iverson Graves, have significance for Georgia. In the first place, as I suggest in this tentative title, they illustrate how one ex-confederate achieved 'rehabilitation' in the last days of Reconstruction. In the second place, they show a Georgian using his talents on a strange and foreign shore and making his contribution to the advancement of civilization.

I am, therefore, submitting to the University of Georgia Press, a suggestion that I edit a book of Graves' letters to be published by the Press. The letters are, for the most part, in the possession of Graves' granddaughter, Marguerite Graves of Columbia, S. C., who will give her permission for their publication. I suggest, also, that Miss Graves join with me as co-author of an 'introductory sketch' of Graves' life.

It was, indeed, an interesting life. Graves was a native of Longwood Plantation, Newton County, Pa. He entered the U. S. Naval Academy under the sponsorship of Alexander H. Stephens. Upon graduation from Annapolis in 1857,

he went on a cruise which took him to Europe, and to Naples where he met Garibaldi* (and sent home a picture of the Italian leader which Garibaldi gave him). At the outbreak of the Civil War, Graves was in the Pacific, and it was not until late 1861--after his relatives had given him up for lost-to-the-Yankees that he was able to resign and enter the Confederate Navy. For a time he served in Mobile harbor, then he went to Europe to bring back a steamer for the Confederacy, then he was on the staff of the Confederate Naval Academy. At the close of the war, he tried farming in Georgia, but a spring freshet washed out his crop just as he was thinking that he was started on a new career, and the Egyptian service offered him an opportunity to get a substantial base ('corn for my family'). He returned to Georgia with his mortgage paid off, drained his land and began anew. At a later time he was engineer building a bridge for a Memphis railroad, and some of the last letters in the collection show him as an honored citizen actively engaged in promoting a classmate for the superintendency of the Naval Academy. He lived until 1896.

Graves' letters are not concerned with public policy, and there is little in them about the vicissitudes of politics. They are, instead, personal letters, revealing the life and interests of an able and cultured gentlemen. He had a taste for literature, a graceful writing style, a sense of humor, a great devotion to his family, a Christian conscience, a high sense of duty and of personal integrity.

As a historian--I cannot refrain from remarking--it is a relief to find someone like this. So many of the characters with whom I have to deal in the course of my research and writing are scoundrels, that it is always a relief to find a man of probity, culture, character, and honor. The history of Georgia during these years contains a high proportion of interesting but dubious characters, and it might be just as well for the honor of the state to call attention to the fact that there were other people than Brown, Calcott, and their like in it. Graves' letters reveal a man of high character.

* (I have the picture. M.B. Graves)

I have not seen all of the letters. They are not in the best of shape, and there are a good many fragments which need to be fitted together. The following, however, can give some idea of the nature and the contents of the letters.

To begin with, there are some letters, and some references in later letters to Annapolis, Graves' cruise on the Iroquois, his illness in Naples, and his return to the United States. At this time he met his cousin, *Margaret Lea of Locust Hill, N. C., and their acquaintance rapidly ripened into love. There are some early courtship letters. There is 'Maggie's' reminiscences of her courtship, and of the family distress when Graves did not return to the Confederacy. There is his return, and reunion and avowal of love (the love letters are right sweet!). Then Graves went to Mobile in the defending squadron. There are items relating to the defenses of Mobile, his opinions on the qualities (minus) of the Flag Officer and His Captain, his preparations for marriage, Maggie came to Mobile, and there's at least one charming letter describing a sailor's bride in port while her husband is with the fleet off-shore. There is a scare of a raid from New Orleans, glimpses of society in Mobile in wartime. The 'historical' material in these letters is slight--but they give a picture of sailor life, fleet life, conditions in port, and the personal relations that I have never seen elsewhere.

* (Calvin Graves' second wife, Mary Wilson Lea, niece of his first wife, Elizabeth Lea, was the widow of Wm. Lea and the mother of Margaret Rockwell Lea. Calvin Graves was the uncle of Chas. Iverson Graves and the stepfather of Margaret R. Lea. The early letters of C.I.G. and M.R.L. (1858-59) were "Dear Cousin and "Dear Cousin Charlie," hence Dr. Hesseltine assumed they were cousins. M. B. G.

I have seen no letters about Graves trip to Europe, but there are referencer which seem to indicate that he went over to bring back vessels which were bought--or which were being built--in France for the Confederate Navy.

I may be able to throw a little sidelight on this episode.

There are other Confederate items--Mrs. Graves, (now 'Chichi'), with Mrs. Davis on the flight from Richmond (The Naval Cadets, you remember, were the guards for Mrs. Davis and the Confederate Treasury), the attempt to buy dress goods in Augusta, the break-up of the party at Washington, Ga.

I have seen no letters, but I have information about and can fill in the gaps, on the farm venture in Rome from 1865 to the collapse in 1875. I may find some letters on this, but in any case, I can piece it together.

Then Egypt. The Egyptian letters are complete, lengthy, detailed, and in good condition. They will, inevitably, constitute the major portion of the book. I shall, however, attempt to prune them so that the volume is not exclusively Egypt with only casual items on other things. They are all wonderful letters, but they can be condensed. Among the major items which they contain are the following: description of leaving the U. S. and the trip to Cairo; the scene of Egypt--grain, and seeds sent home to try out--the tourists sights, pyramids, Nile, canals, life of Egyptians, camels, etc; the Khedive Ismail, with reception of the American officers, and his plan for the modernizing of Egypt; the American officers in the Egyptian army, General W. W. Loring of Bakers Hill and Kenesaw Mountain, Colonel Lockett who built the fortifications of Vicksburg, General C. P. Stone the Egyptian Chief of Staff who had spent time in prison after the defeat at Balls Bluff, A Major White of Georgia who was a drunk and who deserted from the Egyptian service--in fact, a score or more, (Mostly Confederate) officers making their adjustments to Egypt, and nearly all of them failing to bring back the 'corn' which Graves successfully sought; an Egyptian campaign against Abyssinia, in which Graves was in charge of the landing port of Massowah on the Red Sea; surveying expeditions in the 'Lando' Goshen' and meeting with village shieks; the Egyptian visits to Miss Mary Lee (Daughter of General Lee) and how her unconventional conduct scandalized 'Europeans' and embarrassed Americans; commentaries on the Russo-Turkish War, British Diplomacy, international

intrigue in Egypt; the plight of the Egyptian treasury; the differences in Christian and Moslem mores; and finally an expedition to survey for a light-house on Cape Guardafui for which Graves received a Khedive medal and decoration just before leaving the service.

In addition to the Egyptian portion of these letters, there are American (I.E., Georgia) sidelights. Chichi stayed with her five children in North Carolina, and she wrote regularly--and numbered her letters. Whereas most of her letters are personal and family matters, there are some items in hers, and in his, of somewhat broader interest. They had difficulty in collecting the rent for their farm, they had to concern themselves with putting the children in school, they had personal problems--largely financial. There was the Negro militia company being organized, Col. Thompson^{xx} (Cousin Jennie's husband, and wealthy, too) being tried for murder,^x a glimpse into the North Carolina Asylum for the Insane, some personal relations with Tom Slator, North Carolina Radical Governor. And thru them all there runs the refrain of debt, of paying off the debts like an honorable man, and the triumphal return with the 'corn' from Egypt !!

I have seen but little of the post-Egyptian material. Like the Confederate material, it appears to be sketchy, but I think I can piece out a story which will give some balance to the book. Miss Graves and I are in hopes that there may be other letters, both Confederate and post-Egyptian, in the possession of other members of the family. They will not, however, be many.

x (Calvin Graves was a member of the committee appointed by the governor to select a site for the first Asylum for the Insane in North Carolina.)

xx(No clue to Jennie's kinship.)

This, then, is as good an account as I can give of this material, and I think that from it you can judge whether the University of Georgia Press will agree to publish a book of Graves letters. I mentioned that the Egyptian letters would run 500 printed pages. I could not, in all conscience, recommend the publication of so much on so limited a subject with such little relation to Georgia. I think, however, that a judicious selection can be made, and with some editorial interpolations to cover both gaps and condensations, it can be made into an interesting and significant book which ought not to go over 300 pages. I include in that estimate both introduction and an allowance for an index.

I shall, of course, have to ask you to accept my judgment on the merit of this material. Graves was highly literate, and wrote excellent letters. I have been impressed by his general character as a person and by his literary capacity. I think his letters would make a good book, and I think so to the extent that I am willing to take my time to edit the book. I think you understand that I am not an assistant professor piling up a bibliography in order to get a promotion.* I have a * bibliography and I am overage for any serious promotion. Actually, I think this material is interesting enough, and important enough, to merit my time and effort. Naturally, therefore, I think it worthy of your expenditure of effort and money. I think, too, that both the University of Georgia Press and I would lose money on it. Our basic reward would have to be that we had combined a contribution to historical scholarship, and that we had--as Old Lyman Draper used to say--'rescued from oblivion' a meritorious and interesting figure.

WILLIAM B. HESSELTINE - University of Wisconsin
Visiting Professor - University of South Carolina
First Semester 1957-1958

* Dr. Hesselstine is the author of thirteen books. He found valuable information long sought in Grandfathers letters for the book he is writing now --"The Blue and the Gray on the Nile".

(Margaruite B. Graves)

(COPY)

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA PRESS

Athens

January 31, 1958

Dr. William B. Hesseltine
History Department
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina

Dear Mr. Hesseltine;

Dr. Coulter transmitted to me your letter in regard to the proposed edition of the letters of Charles Iverson Graves. I have delayed writing until after a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Press on January 28.

I regret to report that we do not feel that we can at this time commission a manuscript or make a sizable publication cost commitment far in advance. We receive a very limited subsidy from the University on a year to year basis. Since we do not have any endowments bringing in a fixed income, we have to operate on a rather tight budget.

Dr. Coulter and I feel that the book you propose has genuine merit and would make a valuable contribution to historical scholarship, and we are very sorry that our financial situation is such that we cannot make commitments on the project. We appreciate your calling this material to our attention and also your willingness to devote time and energy to it.

I enjoyed meeting and talking with you when you were in Athens, and I hope that you can visit with us again.

Sincerely yours,

(sgd.) Ralph Stephens
Director

RS:ss

(Copy)

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Madison 8

Department of History

Bascom Hall

February 5, 1958

Dear Marguerite:

I enclose the answer that I got from the University of Georgia Press. I think, perhaps, that it is an honest answer; they do not have money and cannot commit themselves to a two-year distant expenditure.

If Charles Iverson Graves had just not had Chichi so close to him at Mobile, or if she had been an Egyptian, let us say, to whom he had to explain and expound all the incidents of his service, he might have written as fine a set of letters about The War as he did about Egypt. Then we wouldn't have had to limit our suggestion to the University of Georgia Press.

Right now, I am not sure whether there is anything that can be done. I don't think I can persuade anyone to take a chance on such a book by writing them. There's Seal Johnson in Jackson, Tenn., who does the kind of publishing that might fit this book, but I'll have to wait until October when I'll see him. I might have a chance to talk with Bell Wiley, Seal's alter-ego, at the end of the month. Anyway, I'll keep working on it, and maybe and perhaps....

We've been thoroughly uncomfortable down here on the Isle of Palms (They're just palmettos, anyway). Oh, not physically uncomfortable. Our two room kitchenette and bathetal keeps as warm as the University of South Carolina's guest house. We are psychically uncomfortable--waiting impatiently for the weather to get warm enough to enjoy the outside.

Meantime, I'm getting inside work done, and writing is coming along pretty well. The worst feature of it is that it shows clearly where I shall have to do more research.

Katherine sends her love--inwhich I join. We are hoping to see you here before we leave, but we hope for warmer weather than we've been having.

Fondly

Bill
(Dr. Wm. B. Hesseltine, Visiting Professor
University of South Carolina.
1st. Semester 1957-58)

wbh

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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON, D. C.

CHARLES IVERSON GRAVES, USN

Born - Georgia

Appointed from: - Georgia

- 1857 June 10 Graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy
Warranted a Midshipman
June 12 Detached from the Academy and to the USS Minnesota East India Squadron
- 1859 June 18 Acknowledges receipt of orders detaching him from the Minnesota. His Post Office is: - Rome, Georgia
On Leave.
Aug. 31 Asks for more leave
Sept. 5 Informed that it is against the practice to grant a longer leave than three months to an officer, so he is to be on waiting orders.
Nov. 14 At Annapolis, Md., for examination
Nov. 17 Asks to be ordered to the USS Iroquois, Mediterranean Squadron
Dec. 1 Informs department his address is now Locust Hill, Caswell Co. North Carolina
Dec. 6 At Navy Yard, New York. Has reported to Commander Breese for duty
- 1860 Oct. 13 On the Iroquois at Naples. Asks for Warrant as Passed Midshipman
Oct. 24 Commissioned a Master
- 1861 Aug. 2 Has reported this day for duty on the USS Saranac, Pacific Squadron
Aug. 14 Commissioned a Lieutenant
Oct. 28 Detached from the Saranac
Nov. 25 Took passage in Wyoming from San Francisco to Panama. Detached.
Dec. 5 At Philadelphia, Pa. Reports his arrival in United States from Pacific Squadron as an invalid. Residence: Downington, Pa. (His oldest sister, Anne Graves, Married Thos. Tarke and lived) (in Downington.)
Dec. 24 Resigned

From - Record Group 45: Officers Letters, Master Rolls, etc.

(sgd) F. Kent Loomis
Captain, UNS (Ret.)
Asst. Director of Naval History

(Copy)

Graves, Charles Iverson

Born in Georgia, Appointed from Georgia. Formerly Lieutenant, U. S. Navy. First Lieutenant, December 27, 1861. First Lieutenant October 23, 1862, to rank from October 2, 1862. First Lieutenant, Provisional Navy, June 2, 1864, to rank from January 6, 1864.

Served on Aquia Creek batteries, 1862. C. S. S. Morgan, Mobile Squadron, 1862-63. Service abroad, 1863-64. C. S. S. Patrick Henry, 1865, C. S. S. Virginia (No. 2), James River Squadron; Flag lieutenant to Flag Officer John K. Mitchell, 1865. With Lieut. W. H. Parker and midshipman from the Patrick Henry acted as escort to Mr. Jefferson Davis and guard for Confederate treasure from Richmond, 1865.

From: - Register of Officers of the Confederate States Navy 1861-1865,
Published by Government Printing Office, Washington, 1931

(signed) F. Kent Loomis
Captain, U.S.N. (Ret.)
Asst. Director of Naval History

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