

LETTER OF JANUARY 9, 1862, FROM CHARLES HERR TO ANNA MARIE STUBER HERR FROM THE CIVIL WAR FRONT.

Translated from the original old German

Beaufort, S. C., Jan. 9, 1862

Dear Spouse

Your letter written December 25, arrived January 8th, and was much appreciated. The next day I quickly took the pen in hand to write you the latest news and how we celebrated the New Year.

The last day in the old year, early in the morning, we marched 10 miles to reach the ferry; however, before we reached the ferry we were forced to halt and spent the night under the sky and awakened at daybreak to change position. As the day advanced we let the cannons sound to wish the Rebels a good New Year, which they had not expected.

The bombardment was ordered twice. The first time brought the Rebels out of the Fort. They fired only twice and disappeared quickly. Then the entire brigade went across the loote(?). Also, many soldiers from Hilton Head were brought up. Consequently the New Year was celebrated on the Main Land.

Late afternoon, however, the Rebels gathered and planned to surprise us, but did not have the courage, because the war ships, which they feared were in their way; and they (the Rebels) soon disappeared. We again spent the night sleeping outside.

On January 3rd the shooting by us began and the ships fired over our heads. We feared for our lives! It all went off well and the Rebels retreated one more. We then went back to our Island. This was the plan of general Stefens (?). We were ordered to destroy the Fort and burn all buildings, which we did. The general was pleased that we carried out his orders so quickly and completely.

Fortunately (there was) only one dead and otherwise no one else had lost his life. The wounded were taken by the 8th Regiment. The dead were left on our soil. We also had one of their captains who was seriously wounded and was treated by our physicians, but later died before he was brought to Beaufort. Today our Drs. Took the dead captain across the line. The Rebels came with a flag of truce and asked for their dead, and we wanted our dead, but they refused to exchange. I saw them with my own eyes, coming and going.

After the bombardment the blacks, with wives and children, came to our side, running away from the Rebels, and told us that loads of wounded and dead were taken away. It is not surprising because the shells were exploding everywhere. A negro said only 3 men were left in camp. One who was a cook in the rebel camp was reported to have said "it is necessary for us to fight because we now have no slaves. We are tired and have little to eat." Their wives and children live in tents, about 500 of them. The negroes say they (the Rebels) will soon be tamed. (Something will be done – before you will receive this letter: - the Rail Road will be destroyed.)

Our Regiment is responsible for picket duty for our company. We are now actually living in a Rebel's house which stands near the water. We can see them and they us. On picket duty we often are so close to the enemy that we talk to each other. We are on picket duty every other night for 24 hours. No chance for sleep. This is rough but, hopefully, relief is near.

After my last picket duty (Dec. 25) I did not feel well and I reported to sickbay even though I was to go on picket duty. I got very cold near the water and developed a bad cold. I hope to feel better soon and will go back on picket duty (even though) it is not the most enjoyable task.

Wilhelm Lang is to be released, I heard. He is sick most of the time and unable to perform his duties. I think he will get a medical discharge.

I so hoped to have you, my dear wife, with me for Christmas and New Years. My dear, here we know nothing about sugar cookies, we were hoping for a little Schnaps but we wonder if Bill Oker has not been able to get it. It may still arrive.

O, dear wife, how I wish I could see you again soon. Not a minute goes by that I don't think of you and hope to be with you very soon, so we can establish our household together. Nothing seems to be more important than to live happily together, even though we are not rich. However, health is the greatest wealth.

Dear wife, I have been through and seen a lot which I am sorry for. I just hope that God will bring me back into your arms and hope it will be soon.

I have changed dear wife. Every night I pray for you and myself. When the time comes when we can be together again we want to go to church regularly and worship together. Therefore, I trust God, and he will look after us both. He will fight for us. His power is stronger than our whole army. Therefore, I depend on Him and pray diligently for strength to fight; then everything is in our hands. I hope God will grant us the power to free the slaves. It is a shame how people are treated.

Now I will come to a close at this time; and hope that my letter will find you in better health than when I left you. Please don't worry about me. God looks after me. I am feeling better already

Greetings to all German friends, especially to Heinrich Buchti and his wife. I would enjoy hearing from them too.

When you write the next time, please send me some stamps. We can't get them here. The soldiers all are getting stamps from home, but don't want to sell them.

John Lowe must have patience until I come home. You don't need to pay him. I will do it myself when I come home. They say that we will soon be paid.

In your last letter you asked if it is true that Hardstein (?) is supposed to have found money. I don't know anything more about it. If he had, he would have told us. (AS much I wished he had found the Money). Earlier, when we were stationed at Hilton Head he and a shoemaker lived in a hut where the soldiers had been living previously. It was there where the shoemaker found a knapsack with some clothing. The shoemaker pretended that the sack contained money. This is how the rumor started. Someone must have written home about this incident.

I hope to hear from you soon. Write me what the birds are doing. I think of feathered friends often as they have been a joy to me.

Don't let anyone read this letter because it is so mixed up

Special greetings and kisses from your loving husband.

Charles Herr

NOTE: Charles Herr did not survive the war, and Anna later married John G. Miller.