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**Historic Notes and Documents:
"Our Desired Haven":
The Letters of Corinna Brown Aldrich
from Antebellum Key West, 1849-1850**

by James M. Denham and Keith L. Huneycutt

On January 8, 1849, Dr. Edward S. Aldrich wrote his wife Corinna Brown Aldrich from Key West, Florida. His description of America's southernmost town spoke of its beauty and economic potential:

It is very cheering to my heart to be able to [rescue] you from trying suspense, as I am convinced I shall, when you have read my report of Key West. . . . [There are as many] pleasant families here as you will find in any southern town of the same population—and in praise of the climate, enough cannot be said—The sea breeze is so exhilarating, and the gardens look so green and fresh, that I can scarce realize the impression that I am still in Uncle Sam's territories. You know what delightful nights we had in Pensacola & St. Augustine in the spring, and summer[?] We have such weather here all the time. The island is six miles long, and there are many pleasant walks about, in different directions.¹

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1. The Library of the United States Military Academy at West Point (USMA) holds a large collection of letters, bequeathed by Miss Mannevillette Sullivan, containing the personal correspondence of her family from 1831 to circa 1900. Ellen Brown Anderson, Corinna's sister, was Miss Sullivan's great-grandmother. The editors of this article thank Miss Sullivan for allowing them to use these family letters, photographs, and genealogy materials. The editors also thank Sheila Hughes for her assistance.

Aldrich added that he had met several acquaintances and former patients, as well as several of the town's leading citizens, most of whom had urged him to move his medical practice from Marietta, Georgia. Among them were men who shared Aldrich's Whig ideals: Joseph B. Lancaster, judge of the Southern Judicial Circuit, and twenty-eight-year old Ossian B. Hart, the circuit's solicitor. With the acquaintance of his new friends, the support of Whig Congressman Edward Cabell and Senator Jackson Morton, and a new Whig administration in the White House, Aldrich predicted that he would secure appointment as army surgeon: "I have every assurance that I shall be employed in preference to either of the other physicians, for the opposing faculty are not held in much respect. One is old. Dr. Peachy hospital surgeon, & his partner, Dr. [Thomas A.] Pinckney—the latter is brother in law of Judge [William] Marvin, & his clerk."² The appointment, along with his regular income as a physician promised a handsome living. Aldrich continued:

Indeed I am already in a better practice than I have ever had in Georgia, and best of all it will pay. The Marine hospital is worth 1200 dollars a year. And as old Peachy is a *loco*, I hope by and by to supersede him.³ . . . I shall have no difficulty about getting a house either at the barracks, or nearer the center of the town. Two of those handsome residences of the barracks are still unoccupied. . . . We have

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2. Edward S. Aldrich, Key West, Fla., to Corrina Aldrich, Marietta, Ga., 8 January 1849, Anderson-Brown Papers, USMA. Theodore A. Pinckney was born in Ontario County, New York, and moved to Key West in 1836. Sometime thereafter, with William Marvin's help, he was appointed Inspector of Customs and Surgeon in the Marine Hospital. Marvin discussed this matter in Kevin K. Kearney, ed., "Autobiography of William Marvin," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 36 (January 1958): 206; also see E. Ashby Hammond, *The Medical Profession in 19th Century Florida* (Gainesville, Fla., 1996), 499-500. A native of New York and one of the nation's leading experts on maritime law, William Marvin served as U.S. District Court Judge of the Southern District of Florida (1847-1863); see Walter Manley, Canter Brown Jr., and Eric Rise, *The Supreme Court of Florida and its Predecessor Courts, 1821-1917* (Gainesville, Fla., 1997), 78-83.
 3. "Loco Foco" was a derogatory nickname bestowed upon Democrats by their Whig adversaries; see Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York, 1999), 109. The battle between "Loco Foco" Democrats and the Whigs was particularly acute in Florida. See Arthur Thompson, "Jacksonian Democracy on the Florida Frontier," *University of Florida Monographs* 6 (winter 1961); Herbert J. Doherty, "The Whigs of Florida," *University of Florida Monographs* 1 (winter 1959); James M. Denham, "The Read-Alston Duel and Politics in Territorial Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (April 1990): 427-46.

three handsome churches, & a fourth new building. . . . [T]here is a society here of sons of temperance & about one hundred & fifty-members. The place is improved much since the severe storm, it is rebuilt in a more substantial manner. [T]ry & sell all goods & chattels, for the expenses of moving goods per sail was & is enormous.⁴

Corinna Aldrich should not have been surprised that Edward was relocating her and her sister's family. The Aldriches had moved frequently since their 1837 marriage in Mandarin, Florida, residing briefly in St. Augustine, Newnansville, and Pensacola—and then in Macon and Marietta, Georgia. In November of 1835, Corinna Brown had moved with her younger sister Ellen from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to Mandarin, joining their brother Charles and their aunts Mary and Ann Dearing, who had relocated to East Florida only months earlier. Another aunt, Delia Dearing Hall, had migrated to Florida in 1832, and with her physician husband James Hall sold the newcomers a small tract adjacent to their plantation.⁵ Ellen, Charles, and Corinna (until her marriage to Edward) cultivated "Llangollen" until 1839, when they sold out and moved to Newnansville. Of the siblings' aunts, Mary died in Mandarin that year, Ann moved to Newnansville, and Delia remained in Mandarin until her death in 1842. In May 1840, their youngest sibling, George, also moved to Newnansville. He and Charles sought to open a dry-goods store together, but Charles died of yellow fever while on a purchasing trip in Savannah, so George pursued the venture alone and soon became moderately prosperous.

As migrants seeking both economic opportunities and escape from a harsh winter climate, the Browns were among an influx of New Englanders who came to Florida beginning in the antebellum era and continuing through the late nineteenth century. Newcomers engaged in mercantile activity, teaching, journalism, and a host of other pursuits. Some, like Ralph Waldo Emerson and John Tappan of Massachusetts, stayed only temporarily. Others, like Charles Hutchinson of Connecticut and Daniel Ladd of Maine, relocated permanently. Perhaps Florida's most famous migrant after the Civil

4. Edward S. Aldrich to Corrina Aldrich, 8 January 1849.

5. (Portsmouth, N.H.) *Journal of Literature and Politics, Rockingham Gazette and State Herald*, 15 June 1833; (St. Augustine) *Florida Herald*, 15 August 1833.

War was Harriet Beecher Stowe, who settled only a mile or so from the Browns' original Mandarin homestead.⁶

In 1837, Corinna met Edward S. Aldrich in St. Augustine. A native of St. Marys, Georgia, and a graduate of the Medical College of South Carolina, he served as surgeon for the East Florida Militia. After their marriage, Edward practiced medicine in Newnansville and maintained contacts with patients and associates at nearby Post No. 12 and Fort King (present-day Ocala). In 1839, Corinna's sister Ellen met Lt. James Willoughby Anderson, a Virginia-born graduate of West Point. They were married on October 26, 1840.⁷ The Andersons set up housekeeping adjacent to Fort King, and, in the following years, Ellen gave birth to two children in St. Augustine: Edward Willoughby on November 12, 1841, and Corinna Georgia on August 4, 1843. Edward's and James's duties with the army during the Second Seminole War (1836-1842) forced the men to move repeatedly throughout Florida. So too did Corinna and Ellen move around the territory—but not always with their husbands. Only George Brown remained settled.

At the conclusion of the Second Seminole War in 1842, Anderson moved his family first to Fort Gratiot, Michigan, and then to Buffalo Barracks, New York. At Fort Gratiot in October 1845, two months after Anderson had left Michigan with his unit for Mexico, Ellen, with Corinna at her side, bore a third child, Ellen Manneville. By then Edward decided to move his wife and her sister's family to Pensacola where the naval yard offered promise, both as the site of a medical practice and as a place to keep close watch over Anderson's movements in Mexico.

In the spring of 1847, Anderson's unit participated in Winfield Scott's amphibious assault on Vera Cruz. Just days before Scott's triumphal march into Mexico City, Ellen received word of her hus-

6. Anne E. Rowe, *The Idea of Florida in the American Literary Imagination* (Baton Rouge, La., 1986), 5; John S. Tappen to Benjamin French, 13 December 1841, Dorothy Dodd Room, State Library of Florida, Tallahassee; James T. Campbell, "The Charles Hutchinson Letters From Territorial Tallahassee, 1839-1843," *Apalachee* 4 (1950-1956): 13; Jerrell H. Shofner, *Daniel Ladd: Merchant Prince of Frontier Florida* (Gainesville, Fla., 1978); Norma B. Cuthbert, "Yankee Preacher-Teacher in Florida, 1838," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 7 (1944): 95-104; Douglas McMurtrie, "The Beginnings of Printing in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 23 (October 1944): 63-96; James Owen Knauss, *Florida Territorial Journalism* (DeLand: Florida State Historical Society, 1927); John T. Foster Jr. and Sarah Whitmer Foster, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers: The Transformation of Florida* (Gainesville, Fla., 1999); Fletcher M. Green, *The Role of the Yankee in the Old South* (Athens, Ga., 1972).

7. Alachua County, Florida, Marriage Records, 1837-1849, Book 1, 22, Florida State Archives, Gainesville, microfilm.

band's death in battle.⁸ Three months later, the Aldriches' house burned to the ground.⁹ This incident no doubt strengthened Edward's determination to leave Pensacola. In autumn of 1848, Edward again moved the family—this time to Marietta. However, Edward remained dissatisfied with Georgia and decided to return to Florida. Thus on April 11, 1849, Edward, Corinna, Ellen and her children—Edward Willoughby (8), Corinna Georgia (6), and Ellen Manneville (4)—left Marietta for their new Key West home. On the way, the group stopped at Charleston, Washington, D.C., and New York City. In May, when they finally arrived, the family also included Virginia Anderson, the younger sister of Ellen's late husband.

When the family reached Key West, the island city contained approximately 2,500 people. The town was an important maritime, fishing, and wrecking center, and its docks and business section bustled with activity. Situated atop the Caribbean, the community enjoyed extensive commercial relations with the Bahamas, Cuba, and other English and Spanish West Indian and South American colonies. Much of the white population of Key West and other keys to the north was composed, at any given time, of cockney fishermen (Conchs), whose turtling and fishing expeditions brought them to the Keys from the Bahamas. These seasonal trips, beginning in the early nineteenth century, eventually led to permanent settlement. Key West's population also included large numbers of soldiers, mariners, and newcomers to American shores, making it one of the most diverse communities in the nation. According to the 1850 Monroe County census, Key West's residents hailed from almost every state in the union and from such faraway places as Norway, France, Italy, Prussia, Gibraltar, Minorca, Sweden, Corsica, Denmark, Holland, Portugal, Canada, and Austria.¹⁰ Three years after the Aldriches arrived, a visitor reported that the town

8. Ellen probably learned first of her husband's death in an account of the Battle of Contreras in the (*Pensacola Gazette*, 11 September 1847. For an account of James's previous military career and his involvement in the Mexican War, see James M. Denham and Keith L. Huneycutt, "With Scott in Mexico: Letters of Captain James W. Anderson in the Mexican War, 1846-1847," *Military History of the West* 28 (spring 1998): 19-48.

9. (*Pensacola Gazette*, 8 January 1848.

10. For general information on Key West, see Walter Maloney, *A Sketch of the History of Key West, Florida* (1876; reprint, Gainesville, Fla., 1968); James B. Browne, *Key West: The Old and the New* (1912; reprint, Gainesville, Fla., 1973); James M. Denham, "A Rogue's Paradise": *Crime and Punishment in Antebellum Florida, 1821-1861* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1997), 54-57; Canter Brown Jr., *Ossian Bingley Hart: Florida's Loyalist Reconstruction Governor* (Baton Rouge, La., 1997), 68-74; Dorothy Dodd, "The Wrecking Business on the Florida Reef," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 22 (April 1944): 171-99.



Mannevillette Elihu Dearing Brown, Corrina Brown Aldrich's brother, was an artist-lithographer. He painted both the portrait of Corrina (on the cover of this issue) and this self-portrait on ivory, 1844. *Courtesy of Mannevillette Sullivan and Jane and Raymond A. Gill.*

boasted 650 houses, twenty-six stores, ten warehouses, four churches, a court house, a jail, a customs house, a marine hospital, and large military barracks. Just off shore he found twenty-seven wrecking, coasting, and fishing vessels in a harbor that easily accommodated vessels needing twenty-two feet of draft.¹¹ Within this diverse culture, Corinna and Ellen expected to enjoy a cosmopolitan society with intellectual opportunities rarely available along the Florida frontier where they had resided previously.

What follows are annotated transcriptions of Corinna Aldrich's letters from Key West to her brother Mannevillette Brown who, having completed his extended "residence in Italy and France" where he studied "art among the noblest galleries of the world," had returned to Utica, New York, to become a successful artist-lithographer.¹² The correspondence offers a rare glimpse of and descriptive details about the island town from a woman's perspective. Corinna's personal musings also offer interesting observations about love and marriage, religion, human nature, and the constraints imposed on women in this time and place. They also reflect her northern education and upbringing, her class, and her favored status as the wife of a respected physician.¹³

Corinna Aldrich, Key West, Florida, to Mannevillette Brown, Utica, New York, 26 May 1849, Anderson-Brown Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

My Dear Brother,

As we are nearing our desired Haven—after the tedious passage of 15 days, I am resolved to drop you a line, despite the rolling and tossing of our barque! for I know you will be very anxious to hear of our safe arrival, and as the *Samson* is

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11. "What I saw at Key West." (Pensacola) *Gazette*, 8 May 1852; (Tallahassee) *Florida Sentinel*, 11 May 1852. For other contemporary descriptions of Key West, see Kearney, ed., "Autobiography of William Marvin," 179-222; Thelma Peters, "William Adee Whitehead's Reminiscences of Key West," *Tequesta* 25 (1965): 3-42; Rember Patrick, ed., "William Adee Whitehead's Description of Key West," *Tequesta* 12 (1952): 61-74.
 12. Undated Utica, New York, newspaper clipping in Mannevillette Sullivan's genealogy materials in possession of the editors; Rosemary Courtney, "M. E. D. Brown (1810-1896): American Lithographer and Painter," *American Art Journal* 12 (autumn 1980): 66-77.
 13. Letters appear in their original form unless otherwise indicated. The editors have retained the original spelling and punctuation wherever the manuscript is clear. Additions and changes are noted in brackets. Also, the editors have added paragraph breaks to indicate distinct shifts in thought or subject.

bound to Apalachicola, and the steamer *Isabel* must have already gone on her way, if I do not improve this chance, I may not have another before the 15th or 16th June when the *Isabel* will again return—She makes but two trips per month.—I can give you no account of our future home, that is all in the distance, and as to our voyage—it has been without excitement or novelty to me—we had one tolerable blow, the first night we neared the Bahama Banks—ever memorable from old Columbus landing, although dreary and barren enough to look upon—The next day, however we were becalmed, and we have had but slight winds since—which accounts for our long passage. At Abaco Island—the negros came off in boats bringing shells and fish to offer in exchange for bread & meat—and *all you'll please to give 'em*. They are the most greedy beggars I ever met with—but certainly excusable—for their land is but a heap of sand and rocks, and they poor and ignorant. One old grey beard, who is nominally the governor—or a sort of driver appointed by the black Prince of Nassau to keep the lesser darkies in order—came out in a light boat, and introduced himself as His excellency John D. Ellis—Governor of Abaco. He proved the greatest beggar of them all, but our captain has a true sailor's heart, and gave to them all, liberally. They were not as free in return as I expected—but held on to their fishes & shells for a price! I bought a pair of the latter—more in charity, than admiration, however, as they were not choice specimens.¹⁴

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14. Corinna's encounter with Afro-Bahamians is typical of the continual interaction between these folk and ships passing along the Florida coast during the nineteenth century. Economic and social exchanges were common. With the collapse of the Bahamian economy in the late 1800s, Afro-Bahamians began migrating to South Florida to seek seasonal agricultural work. When Miami emerged in the late 1890s, Abaco blacks seeking economic opportunities helped to found Coconut Grove and Miami. Thus some of these blacks selling provisions to Corinna's party may well have been the parents of those who eventually relocated permanently in Florida. See Marvin Dunn, *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century* (Gainesville, Fla., 1997), 1-19, 34-44, 51-73, 95-100; Paul S. George, "Colored Town": Miami's Black Community, 1896-1930," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 56 (April 1978): 432-35. Bahamian blacks and their progeny had significant impact in Florida into the twentieth century, taking on leadership roles in civil rights struggles in their communities. As Robert W. Saunders has written, "[M]any influential Blacks in Key West and Tampa either were born in the Bahamas Islands or descended from Bahamians. . . . Bahamian traditions remained strong in these families and were passed down." See his *Bridging the Gap: Continuing the Florida NAACP Legacy of Harry T. Moore* (Tampa, Fla., 2000), 27-8.

We have been beating about among these reefs and Islands for the last six or seven days. This afternoon we crossed the Gulph Stream. and to-morrow Morning, we hope to reach Key West. At all events—if you receive, you may be sure we are there! I shall write you a long letter by the next mail, and hope then, My dear good Manne to give you a favourable account of our proceedings. Virginia and Ellen were quite sick the first few days—and Edward and the children a little so—but all are now well—and seem to enjoy the bright clear atmosphere—especially at night. I believe no where on earth are there *such* moonlight nights as in this latitude—so clear—the breeze so soft and so refreshing—you laugh, but I tell you, My Dear Manne, it is not the heat of a southern clime that is so very objectionable—but the long long season. This is what debilitates. If we had no more warm weather than you have at the North—no one would complain of the heat. Our nights are always pleasant.—I see the wind is breezing up now, and I must hurry through or my candles won't hold out while I drop a line to George. There is a lantern in the cabin, but it only serves to make darkness visible¹⁵—and the candles are flowing in rivers down the sides. We have had several rainy days that were so agreeable! It is not charming to have a small gale, a rough sea—torrents of rain—all of consequence confined to the cabin—one half confined to their berths & the others obliged to lie down because they can't stand up! Oh! then how I wish myself on shore! Yet we soon forget it, and in time get used to it, as well as to the dreary monotony of a cabin. All the folks, save the little ones, are on deck—but I hear them coming down.

I must say good night—God bless you my own Dear Manne—and reward your deeds of love and kindness—I trust Ed will do well—I see no reason why he should not, and may we all soon meet again—I would not give up the satisfaction of having seen you, Dear, for any consideration—but I do hope, when next I go abroad—I may not have to furnish a house—have but so much to do it with and so many hours to do it in!—Oh no—I never will put myself in

15. See John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book I, line 63.

just such a fix—yet I would do it all, and twice as much—if we could but be nearer each other—I trust in God that time may yet come—He who rules our destiny knows what is best for us—and I try to be content.—You must give my best, my very best love to Mrs. [Sarah] Walker and family. Tell her I do want to see her very much indeed, and that I hope the time is not far off.—E. says if Gov. gives him the surgeon's birth¹⁶, he will let Elle & I—come on with George in the Fall, and join you in a trip to New England. Would it not be nice?—I had some pretty dresses made up to visit Utica, I tell Ell as I did not wear them—I intend to reserve them until I go north again, if I come out, like the ladies of Llangollen¹⁷ in the style of another century!—again good night, Dearest. Write soon and direct to Key West Florida via Charleston per steamer Isabel. I shall write by her—*deo volente* [God willing]—via Elle & Ed all send love & the children kisses—Tell Mrs W. to write me. By & by if I live—I will send her some fruit—it is not in season now—but soon will be—there I must stop—

Ever your own devoted sister,
Corinna

Corinna Aldrich, Key West, Florida, to Mannevillette Brown, Utica, New York, 8 June 1849, Anderson-Brown Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

Dear Brother,

I was very glad to receive your three kind letters by the last mail. I am happy to learn also, that you reached Utica in time to see your good friends before their departure. I should think it was a warm season to visit Europe, but I suppose they expect to be absent a long time. I wrote you by the vessel via Apalachicola on the day of our arrival, but before we reached the land, our voyage was so long I thought you might feel anxious about us although there is little danger from storms at this season. We landed on Monday morning the 28th and never were poor souls more glad to

16. Variant spelling of "berth."

17. A reference to Ellen, Corinna, and Charles's farm, adjacent to Dr. James Hall's plantation near Mandarin.

find a haven—for we had been becalmed on the reefs, or among them, and were well nigh devoured by *mosquitos* and *sand flies* and alas! these same pests are the bane of Southern Florida. Were it not for them, this land would be a paradise. The climate is lovely—The sea breeze almost constant—and last but not least, *money plenty!* There was a wreck brought in last week worth 140 thousand dollars—and another this week. And there the wreckers—wharf owners—&c., all get heavy salvage—besides the goods are sold at auction, and great bargains often made.

I began this yesterday, Dearest, but finding out the boat would not be here before to-morrow, I deemed it best to defer until the last minute that the news may be as fresh as possible—you may judge how these confounded mosquitoes bite by the way I write. I have to scratch between each word. All the consolation is they come only in spells. This month is said to be the worst & in winter they are not troublesome—but sometimes I think they will kill me, out & out! Still I think this must be a delightful residence in winter. We have a very pretty home—and a large yard full of trees—cocoa nuts full of fruit—almond - dates & tamarinds. This place is said to be the jewel of the island. There are many larger houses, but none so full of shrubs & trees. These are a great protection from the sun.

Edward has just come in. He has mounted a regular sombrero with a brim six inches wide. Virginia is writing at the same table—the children are running around us—& Ellen is writing in the parlour. She will drop you a line. I intend to write George. Edward is writing to Washington—he is very desirous of obtaining the appointment of surgeon of the Hospital & really I think he ought to have it. With it, he would soon get ahead here but without I do not think the practice would compensate him for the privation of living in such a mosquito hole. I mean he could do as well in many a pleasanter location—Pensacola or even in New Orleans. In fact, I tell him if he does not proceed—I would remove there in the fall. We could do so with little expense and once *located* in New Orleans, he could not fail. . . . One reason why I like New Orleans is because I think it would be a fine place for you as well as Edward and for George—also. All trades thrive there.

This place has greatly improved since I was here before. There are many new & handsome houses & ware houses—also Gov[ernment] is building a large fort and the Barracks are manned and various improvements as well as a large increase in the population, but still it has no charm for me. We had a fine *serenade* last night for young Spaniards came round in the moonlight and regaled us for an hour or so. I do think they have the brightest moonlight here of any place in the world, but these mosquitos, alas, “the trail of the serpent is over it all”¹⁸ & in my last I wrote of visiting New England with you this summer, but I am afraid, Dear, it will be too expensive a jaunt for us to think about unless Ed gets the talisman from Uncle Sam. You see Ell won’t go without the children. Then we must take a servant and the expense would be more than doubled thereby. She wants me to go on my own to see you, but I don’t like to leave her. Virginia & the Dr. say they would take good care of the little ones—and I have no doubt they would be more comfortable than in travelling—at least the two little ones. But we shall see. If my health should fail me, I shall be obligated to go on towards the Fall to recruit.¹⁹ I could take a packet from here to New York & the expense would not be much, even for her & me. . . .

I know I would like right well to be with you a while on any terms. I do want to see your paintings so much. Manne, you must get a *wife!* Then we could pay you a *visit!* . . . I am selfish in regard to you and George, but not so much so, but that I [do not] want to see you happy and I believe if you were each *happily* married you would be a great deal happier. But be sure you make a *right choice*. If I were only an old maid, how nicely you & I could live together—The girl we brought out has so far proved herself worthy. I don’t know what we should have done without her. We have one new woman left who does our cooking and washing. So we get on very well. We had a time in putting the house to rights, but it is nearly settled now. As to the cooking, that is not much. The market is very poor fish & turtle—turtle and fish are the varieties with an occasional stake of tough beef.

18. Thomas Moore, *Lallah Rookh. Paradise and the Peri*, line 206.

19. “Recruit” in this sense means to refresh one’s spirits or health.

No vegetables and but little fruit. Indeed people ought to make money here and I expect they do. That is—the wreckers and merchants. The lawyers also do well, but how the Drs. fare remains to be proved. Were I alone, thousands would not tempt me to live through a summer here. In winter no doubt 'tis pleasant enough. All those who are able send their families away in the summer. However, the nights are cool and pleasant—there is none of that salty, suffocating weather you feel at the north. It would be hard if there were not some blessings where there are so many evils to endure. People say they get used to the mosquitos. I hope I shall if I must live here. Now my arms & neck are just as raw as if I had been blistered. But I won't grumble any more. I did not mean to do so for I came voluntarily although I must say I did not know what I was coming to neither did Edward—for we had only been here in winter. And I can't bear to say anything to worry him—for I am sure if he could, he would bear all for us. I will try & be patient until we find out whether 'tis best to remain or against. And consolation is—he is not losing here—and it will cost no more for us to go to Pensacola or New Orleans hereafter than if we had not stopt here—as this is the best rent. I expect I have tired you out dear; but I had to blow out.

When I write you again, I will try and give you some idea of the town or whatever it is called. It contains three thousand inhabitants—all squatted together on the Gulph shore. We went up in one of the observatories or lookouts where the wreckers go to play *their game*—and we had a fine view of the village. It is about as large as St. Augustine and built after the same style—narrow streets—& low houses. More of this hereafter. I must close dear or I shall be eaten up alive. I hope in the next mail there will be a [renewal] of this crop at least. Ellen & E are both writing you. You have to take all at once, as there are but two mails a month. You must write Dear—so as to have your letters reach Charleston on the 14th and 30 of each month. The boat leaves there on the first and 18th of each month. You must give my love to Mrs. Walker. . . . Tell her I will send her a barrel of Cocoa nuts by & by. Our trees are full. They look very pretty and of all sizes on the same tree from the blossoms to full grown fruit, although not yet ripe. It is a very

graceful tree, I wish I could draw that I might give you more idea of our place. I will try as soon as the mosquitos die off a little. I may be able to give you a hint. You can fill up the picture.

God bless you dear Manne all send love ever yours
Corinne.

Corinna Aldrich, Key West, Florida, to Mannevillette Brown, Utica, New York, 21 June 1849, Anderson-Brown Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

We sent you a whole budget of letters the last mail, My dear and best of brothers, but as we have only two chances per month, I doubt not you will be glad to hear from us again. I was disappointed not to get any letters by this mail, yet I ought not to have been—for no one could know whether we were here or not. We shall probably get plenty next time—and that will not be long—at least as so far the time has passed quickly. There is no antidote for discontent or ennui like occupation—that I learned long ago—and consequently keep myself always busy. Indeed we have had plenty to do since we came. To set a house to rights—at best is no trifling matter—but when it's small and inconvenient, the difficulty is great. We have the consolation, however, of having what is called the *prettiest* place on the island, and really when I look upon it in the moon light particularly I am quite charmed.

The foliage of the cocoa nut is, as a lady remarked the other day, "*so very oriental.*" There is a good deal of shrubbery about the yard, and every thing grows so luxuriantly—The hybiscus, the oleander, the jasmine, the popinac or acacia, the plantain almond, fig, lime, & etc. The flowers on many of these are gorgeous—and stand up like quaint nosegays. While the dark green leaves of the almond & lime contrast magnificently—I could describe a charming place, indeed—and not exceed the truth—yet to look upon, it is not really so. If it were not for the dread of the hurricane, I think they would make a beautiful place—but they are wholly discouraged since the storm of 46—that destroyed all the gardens—indeed it laid waste the city—blew down houses—uprooted trees—and made havoc every where—But the house we live in withstood the gale, and I

don't think it probable we shall ever have such another.²⁰ Edward is doing very well in his practice and seems to be gaining popularity every day. He books on an average ten dollars per day, and yet there is not much sickness. Every body seems to fear the cholera, but I see no cause for alarm. The air is so pure & the wind sweeps over the whole island let it come whence it may.

We have become acquainted with several very pleasant families—and altogether there is far more civilization and refinement than I had any idea of meeting. In a few years, if no misfortune should happen to retard the prosperity of the place—I think Key West, will stand a fair competition for refinement and intelligence with any of our older southern towns. Most persons here get rich, and as their treasures increase, they incline to comforts and refinement. They build houses—plant gardens, and send their children away to be educated. There are three or four young ladies here now, who have but recently returned from New England boarding schools—Moreover you can tell directly you see them—you know they were not “brought up” in these parts! we have an *artist* a Miss [Julia] Wall—she has several paintings in oil of her own execution—I am not judge enough to decide on their merits—but I should not deem them very fine. However, I could not do as well. She is not pretty but a good natured fat laughing girl, full of fun & frolic. Her Pa has the biggest house—& is about the richest man—and she runs about & amuses herself—leading, I doubt not, a very merry life despite her having been seven years at the north.²¹ There are two young

20. The hurricane that struck Key West on October 11, 1846 was one of the most devastating to hit Florida in the nineteenth century. Over fifty persons perished and almost every physical structure on the island was swept away. For descriptions of the storm, see Jay Barnes, *Florida's Hurricane History* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998), 59-60; Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart*, 68-69.

21. Julia Wall, age 17, resided at Aaron Frierson's residence; Population census, 1850, Monroe County, Fla. Her father, William H. Wall, was not recorded by the census taker. Corinna's 11 August 1849 letter mentions that he had gone to Cuba. William Marvin noted that Wall “had been baptized in the Church of England but educated and brought up among Roman Catholics in Spain”; Kearney, ed., *Autobiography of William Marvin*, 202.

ladies here. The Misses Lancaster—(their father is judge of the Supreme Court) who amuse me not a little.²² One is rather passe—the younger is very sentimental. I talk to her, or rather wind her up & set her going, just to hear her unwind—last evening she spent the evening with us, and it was too funny to hear her descant on the beauties of the night. Although she is not far wrong there, for I do think we have the loveliest moonlight nights here I ever saw—you think I am not taking much trouble in my penmanship. The truth is Dear, I have had so many things to prevent my writing until to day that I am now obliged to hurry to get through. I have scribbled George a few lines—and want to write one letter on business and one for Jane the girl we brought from N.Y. En passant, mon cher frere [By the way, my dear brother], she proves quite a treasure in her way. I like her very much—but we have the meanest sample of a negro for a cook & I am much afraid she will spoil her. I try hard to keep them apart but it seems impossible. Kindred spirits will draw together—where both are ignorant—'tis a difficult thing to steer among them—I find it so—I want Edward to sell the old imp, and either hire, or try another, for 'tis like a ticket in a lottery to buy a negro—sometimes you get a prize. But I try to be satisfied—and let all things take their course.

One comfort we have is a delightful climate—the breezes here are charming—so cool & refreshing. The mosquitos are not half so bad as represented. They only last a few days—the first fresh breeze sends them all off. I thought when we first arrived, (it happened to be during an attack of the varmints) I thought they would eat us alive—without pepper or salt—indeed we were almost mad with them, and people told us, by way of a marvel, that they

22. Eliza, age 27, and Laura, age 22, lived with their parents Joseph B. and Annie Blair Lancaster. He was one of Florida's leading Whig politicians, serving in the legislative council, as an Alachua County Judge, as port collector in Jacksonville, as mayor of Jacksonville, as Speaker of the State House, and as a judge of the Southern Judicial Circuit; Population census, 1850, Monroe County Fla.; Manley, Brown, and Rise, *The Supreme Court of Florida*, 128-31; Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart*, 73-74, 84, 92; James M. Denham and Canter Brown Jr., *Cracker Times and Pioneer Lives: the Florida Reminiscences of George Gillett Keen and Sarah Pamela Williams* (Columbia, S.C., 2000), 150-51; John B. Phelps, *People of Lawmaking in Florida, 1822-1993* (Tallahassee, Fla., 1993).

hadn't begun to come. It was all moonshine, however, so far they have gone and have not returned—only occasionally, but not worse than elsewhere at this time of the year. By the way—I see the cholera is in N.Y. are the people alarmed? I feel as if I wanted to fly, when I think of sickness—If it were not for my implicit trust in God—and belief that He overrules all destiny, I should be tempted to start off to day—and try what I could do—I wish I wore pantaloons. . . .

But 'tis time enough to talk of these matters—We all keep well—The children often talk of you & name their dolls for you—Last evening young Mr [William B.] Lancaster came in & they thought it was you—it was quite a disappointment. Dr. is in his room that he has appropriated mixing medicine—Ell has left off writing being tired out & is rocking sis—Villette is flying round. Virginia is dressing—The sun is about going down—and as the twilight here is very brief—I must [steal] away—I could chat with you all night—Dear—and never grow weary—but you might so farewell—write often—give my love to Mrs. Walker and the young ladies—I hope the ring came safely—God bless you Darling

Ever truly & affectionately yours
Corrina

Corinna Aldrich, Key West, Florida, to Mannevillette Brown, Utica, New York, 8 July 1849, Anderson-Brown Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

Mon cher frere. I deferred writing your letter until to day in order that you might have the latest possible news. I believe Ell has thereby forestalled me in telling you all there is. One thing would amuse you—here it is—the funny kind of fuss and rumpus a wreck of dry goods knocks up here among all classes. For my part I wonder how the merchants make a living. I suppose, however, they buy in quantities and lay by until the novelty is over. Most persons too are improvident. There was a good deal of wisdom, in old Jake Sheaf's advice to give the poor a little at a time & often. He said if they had a chest of tea they would put a pound in the pot and it is somewhat the case with all of us. We hate to use the economy with a small quantity, that we do when pinched a little in weight or measure—n'est pas? [isn't it so?] My french is weak. . . .

[Edward] is still trying to get the appointment of surgeon at the Hospital & indeed he ought to have it. The man who is surgeon at this time is absent & has been since before we came—& the one who is surgeon pro tem is also clerk of the court and moreover is one who once held the office, under Van Burin I believe, and was turned out . . . He being at that time also deputy collector, it seems he is a monopolist. He approved his own accounts and thereby got seventeen hundred dollars for medicines at the Hospital for one year. A sum sufficient, the Dr. says to defer the expenses for a major Hospital, but this is not all. This man Pinkney is a loco foco and clerk of the court. I don't see how one man can hold two offices which call for such opposite abilities. . . .

George, I suspect is getting rich, and my dear Manne, I think your chance is *fair too*. I am right glad you are doing so well but if we live out the winter, I want you to come out and go to Savanna with us. You could get 2 or 3 hundred for a portrait there—here even. A dauber came last winter & he had 100 for his productions. I wish you could see them. Every one, you know, likes a pretty picture [and] will pay for it, whether they are judges of the execution or not. . . . Ell is just come in from church. Do you know Charles Adams, of Portsmouth notoriety, is our pastor? She is abusing me, because my dress is soiled. The fact is I have to wear white most of the time & as I often go to my pantry—to stir up cake & pastry. I am apt to get a lick. Last evening I went into the kitchen to call the cook to take out breakfast and Jane and I killed two big scorpions. Their bite, however, is misrepresented. It is by no means so poisonous as many believe, not more so than a wasp or a bee! Still they are so ugly, we can't but deplore them. . . . I never saw one half as large before—and these I am told are small.

To turn to a more interesting if not more agreeable theme, I must reply to your hints respecting your love farce—for I can give it no better name. If you told me all and truly of the matter—believe me dear—there is no harm done. I have this mail written George a long chapter on the subject of matrimony—and I will venture, my dear, as I have had experience, to repeat some of my sage advice to you. I don't know why people should jest and make light of

the matter, the most important event, not only to the parties concerned, but ultimately, I repeat, the most important event of our mortal life—to the whole human race. Reflect my dear, how all important to you, your friends, to your children, is a happy marriage. And what a purgatory an ill matched pair create. Verily a crust of bread where love is, is better than all the gold of California if it shine only upon hearts at variance. I believe in the most refined, the most exalted love—in the perfect mirror of thoughts, feelings and sympathies. In an attachment where no sordid notions of wealth or avarice dare intrude—and this is the only kind worth the seeking. Moreover, my good Brother, love to be lasting *must* be based upon intimate knowledge of a character we *esteem*. Love the result of fancy, only intoxicates, and wears off with the excitement which produced it. But there is a kind of slower & more lasting growth, and the only kind worth having. Ponder well on what I say & never believe yourself won in a day. Nothing would please me more than to see both you and George happily married and surely no regrets could be more poignant than to know the reverse were the case. As I said before, however, I don't think you are badly wounded. I know too well the *symptoms*. He jests at scars, who never felt a wound!²³ Are you tired of what I say? n'importe [no matter], My prayer is that you may one day be able to say—as much happiness as mortals are permitted to enjoy is mine, for my wife is "all my fancy painted her," and like good wine improves by age. . . . Good-bye dear yrs

C.

Corinna Aldrich, Key West, Florida, to Mannevillette Brown, Utica, New York, 21 July 1849, Anderson-Brown Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

My Dear Manne:

[T]he steamboat ceases to run until the first of October or after what are thought the hurricane months. The mail will at interims be carried by sail vessels. It is a great

23. William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, scene 2, line 1.

disappointment to us outlanders thus to be cut off from our only chance of regular intercourse with the world! We are in hopes to get a peep now and then, however, as we are bound to have a mail twice a month, somehow. It is said they have two fine vessels engaged. Still, if you should not receive our documents so from July, thereafter—you will know to what cause to attribute it. . . .

When we first came here—the mosquitoes were so intolerable and being told they would increase rather than diminish, Ell & I resolved on flight at any hazard. But that evil is remedied. 'Tis true, we are still amazed by the varmints, but they are by no means so intolerable as they were. Indeed, I do think this is a heavenly climate. I never was in a place where the cool breezes were so constant as here—or so refreshing—but that is all we get now of the luxuries of life—no fruits. In fact, there is no market—a bit of good beef is a rarity—although we have such granddaddy turtles—They would pass for beef in haunch stake. . . .

We actually *feed* on *watermelons*. They are the only fruit we get except West India productions and most persons are afraid to eat them. I have a glass of ice water by my side which is also quite refreshing. What a blessing it is—I don't know how they existed without it in the olden times—The discoverer for preserving it should be knighted. You see, I have taken you at your word—that the letter would not be too long. Indeed I did not know until just now that I had written so much which proves that it interests me and you are *bound to be interested*. I intend dear to make the most of you before you get that *little wife*—because I *know* I cannot hold the same place then as now! Don't shake your head, it must be so, and I shall be content—because I only desire to see you happy & beloved. I wish you could feel the nice breeze we are enjoying. As I sit at my bedroom window, I look out through the coconut trees on the wide gulph & watch the breeze as it ripples o'er and wonder that anything so calm & lovely can be tossed into such a tempest as nearly to overwhelm us.

By the way, is Mrs. Walker fond of flowers? I could send her some. I will enclose you a speciman of a kind of Jessamine, the Spanish Jessamine 'tis called & grows here luxuriantly. The perfume is delightful & very strong. If she likes

to cultivate anything of the kind, let me know & I will cut some slips for her & also get her some seeds. I intend to send her & you a lot of coconuts by & by—some are nearly ripe, others will not be until winter. They are all sizes on the trees from the blossom to the full grown fruit. We have tamarinds and dates just starting forth. This place we live on might be made very delightful. When the doctor gets the Hospital I intend to lay by enough to buy it—if we live long enough. However, I don't much care. 'Tis no use to try and count on the future. It rests with One who oversees all our plans. Ell & I are resolved to learn the Spanish language & it being one present amusement, I mention it, although the end thereof is far off I reckon. . . . I have no *news* to add but our united love we heartily send. Take good care of your dear self and believe me your grateful and affectionate sister. P.S. I have lost the jessamine I will press another. I send a tamarind.

Corinna Aldrich, Key West, Florida, to Mannevillette Brown, Utica, New York, 11 August 1849, Anderson-Brown Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

My Dear Manne:

A boat having touched in here from New Orleans—My Dear Manne, and bound to New York—I cannot let slip the opp[ortunit]y to drop you a line. She leaves again in the morning, so I have only time to say how d'y do?—If she were to remain a few days—I should be tempted to put myself on board instead of a letter—for I feel greatly like taking a *trip* but am not ready. Nevertheless, I mean to come by and by!—I want to see you, and Mrs. Walker, and also to show you I can behave pretty—and above all, I want to bring you back with me! I think a visit here would benefit you in many ways—If you could only see the *portraits* one Ms.[Julia] Wall daubed here last winter—and then went over to Cuba, and did likewise—carrying off no small quantity of doubloons! . . . We all continue in good health. Indeed I do think this is one of the most healthy places in the world—and yet they contrive to keep the Dr pretty busy—he has 3 or 4 patients to visit every day—notwithstanding we have neither yellow fever or cholera. . . .

We have a rumour by a boat from Tampa Bay—that the *Indians* have again taken to arms and are murdering—plundering & setting fire as of yore—this, if true, will be a pretty business for Uncle Sam, inasmuch as, the war was thought to be ended long ago—by poor old Gen [William Jenkins] Worth! For me, I always thought it would be their joking—They have only bided their time! We know, for certain, that a party of Indians attacked a settlement about 3 weeks since at Indian Key—about 180 miles above this, on the Florida coast, and killed several persons—routed the balance and burned the houses!—last week, they ran off 18 families on Peas creek, above Tampa about 30 miles—killed the Indian agent, and fired the store.²⁴ This was the very way the war began before I was told. Thank Heaven—we are quite as safe here as if in New York. You have no idea, My dear Brother of the horrible suspense of lying down at night—with the probability of being routed out of bed before day, by an Indian war whoop!—It seems to me—for years I never slept without one eye open!—I would awake at the tread of a spider—and jump at the sound of a cricket! suspecting a decoy in every sound.—I shall never forget the first night I slept in Georgia—out of the reach of savages after having passed three years in this state. It was like being in Paradise—and yet there was no real danger—I know it now but then I did not—and when I saw they set fire to a house not a quarter of a mile from ours, & heard them yell—I don't think it was cowardice to dread their coming closer! I feel sorry for the poor settlers about the wilds of Florida. They will all be broken up, and the poverty and distress consequent upon these moves is only second to being scalped!—I say again Thank God we are out of harm's way. This island is 160 miles from the main land—They will

24. James W. Covington, "The Indian Scare of 1849," *Tequesta* 21 (1961): 53-64; idem, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville, Fla., 1993), 112-20; idem, "Billy Bowlegs, Sam Jones, and the Crisis of 1849," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (January 1990): 299-311; Edwin C. McReynolds, *The Seminoles* (Norman, Okla., 1972), 264-66; Canter Brown Jr., *Fort Meade, 1849-1900* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1995), 1-8; idem, *Florida's Peace River Frontier* (Gainesville, Fla., 1992), 80-84; Michael Schene, "Not a Shot was Fired: Fort Chokonikla and the 'Indian War' of 1849-1850," *Tequesta* 37 (1977): 19-37.

scarcely venture that far by water—and if they should I think we could swamp them ere they landed.—

The children are flying round with their dolls. They have all the family! But my dear Manne—they are so full of boils—in fact, all the children in town are so—'tis said—it prevents their having fevers—so I suppose 'tis the lesser evil—but it makes them look bad—Ell & I are digging away at the Spanish language—I expect Ell will accomplish it—as she is like she was of old—let every thing else go, & drive at the main stay—whereas I see so many other nails to hit on the head—I fear I shall never get through—however I plod along. The weather is tremendous about this time. How is it with you? Indeed 'tis too hot to do any thing—and I do feel so good for nothing—I think sometimes I will lie down and let everything go—then I arouse myself and so the time goes by—I could not believe it was so late as the 10th Aug—when I began to write.—One might suppose the time passed merrily. . . .

Your devoted sister Corinna

P.S. We have just heard by a vessel from N.Y. the vexatious intelligence that a *noted quack*—one Dr. Jones²⁵—who was hired to quit this place—has been appointed Hospital Surgeon—But as he is very unpopular—and no kind of a physician it is hoped his appointment will not be confirmed by the senate. Edward says—Dear Manne—that he intends to get certificates of this fellow's *incompetency*, and a petition for his removal—and send them on to Washington—& try & get the appointment yet. Is it not too bad—that politicals should have the power to put such a man in such a station. I pity the poor fellows he may have to close. I would not let him physic a cat for me—E will get all the private practice—however indifferent Uncle Sam may be to his patients—E will write you by the mail—but mean time—Dear—if you have any opportunity to favour E's course—I would be glad. We have the sloop of war *Germantown* just arrived—no news. The people speak of petitioning Congress for E to have the Hospital.

25. A native of Virginia, S. F. Jones first came to Florida in 1840, practiced medicine in St. Augustine until 1844, then moved to Key West. While there he became active in the 1848 presidential campaign of Zachary Taylor. He served until 1854. See Hammond, *The Medical Profession in 19th Century Florida*, 322-23.

Corinna Aldrich, Key West, Florida, to Mannevillette Brown in Utica, New York, 3 September 1849, Anderson-Brown Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

I trust, Dear Manne, there was no serious cause for our not hearing from you the last mail: but really it was too bad, to look out for three weeks as anxiously as I did for the mail, and then not get a single letter: neither from you or George! At first I feared you were ill, but after reflecting how long the mail had been coming, I thought it probable you had not written in time, and so look forward to the next boat, which is daily expected. I intend to write Mrs. Walker to day. I had hoped to have left here, ere now for your good city, but circumstances alter cases. E's not getting the hospital made me think I ought not to go now—and the cholera that it was best not to, until cold weather—and moreover as it is to feel the cold weather in part, that I undertake the journey, I think I shall defer my visit until November. I see by the papers you have warmer weather than we do—but not so much of it—and we have no cholera, yellow fever, or any other dreadful disease, indeed Dear Manne, this is a fine climate. The only trouble is, it debilitates me, but I am in hopes E will get on so I can take a trip off once in a year or so—and that will invigorate me again. . . .

Ell is very busy making clothes for the little folks—she says she will write you. As for me, I have been repairing damages in my *gentle man's* wardrobe the past three weeks—for the first time in my life. He never would let me sew for him, but necessity knows no law—and as it is next to impossible to get sewing well done, and as the girl we brought out with us, proved to be a good sewer—he consented for us to try & like many another once begun he has kept us at it—last week I cut him a black sack coat and it fits first rate: also a pair of white pants! Do you remember the brown vest I made for you? in days lang syne. . . .

I tell you Manne 'tis getting *warmish* here. How is the weather with you? & how is the cholera? We have no epidemick here as yet. Indeed it is very healthy—although the Dr. finds something to do. He averages about 6 or 7 dolls. per day good and sometimes more—in fact he books more—but 'tis not all *sure pay*. But his average practice is better

here than it has ever been when out of Gov. employ—money is plenty—and gold & silver the circulation medium—you never see old ragged bills, or any thing of the sort. At Marietta & in fact all through Georgia every thing is *notes* and credit, and precious little pay at that, but here every man handles his doubloons! I want you to come, and take a few—I think you would enjoy a winter out here. 'Tis thought there will be a great many strangers here this winter and I do think it the best climate by far for invalids I ever was in—the temperature of the atmosphere is so equal and so dry, far more so than Upper Florida or West. . . .

P.S. I forgot to tell you Ell & I were studying Spanish & we get on famously. Last week we had to make a call at a house where not one could speak English. We made out quite a chat. They seemed to understand all we said—after a few weeks more study—we intend to go to see them to *practice*—'Tis getting dark

Dearest

Good night and God bless you

Ever yrs C.

Corinna Aldrich, Key West, Florida, to Mannevillette Brown in Utica, New York, 23 October 1849, Anderson-Brown Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

To our surprise & almost dismay dear Brother, we learn the mail will close at six o'clock tonight instead of the day after tomorrow her usual time. This happens in consequence of the steamer's being obliged in the interval of time to her next trip, to go to New York for some repairs to her machinery! What a nice chance it would be for me to go on if I were ready. That is an objection I could easily miss out, however, if she did not charge so exorbitantly, 50 dollars or 55 I don't know which. 'Tis true, this is no more than the regular passage by steamer via Charleston—30 from here to C. & 25 thence to N.Y. but I can take passage in a fine packet, one of those which run to New Orleans, frequently touch in here for one half or less than half—the only difference to me will be in time, and as I am on no very important errand, the delay of a few days will make no material difference. Many persons think it more safe to go by steamer, but

as to that I place my trust in a higher power than any element of earth. God will protect me and carry me as safely in a packet as a steamer. I know if I had my choice, unbiased by expense, I might choose the *Isabel*, as she is a fine boat & I know her Captain & still I would rather come on a *packet* or not at all or in any way to incur such outlays. I feel I ought not to indulge. Edward's practice here will do no more than keep the pot boiling unless it should vastly increase this winter. It may, as often invalids resort here & probably will this season in preference to going to Florida while the mainland is harassed by marauding Indians.

Do you hear any thing of the war! Whether it is a war, or not! We are, as it were, out of the land of truth. Such garbled reports are brought as none can digest or credit. The last was that Billy Bowlegs (who, en passant, is . . . nearly straight in his pedestals!) was to have a talk, which means, a speech made up by Uncle Sam & put in his mouth by an interpreter, but any how he was to meet Gen. [David] Twig[g]s, and say whether he would fight or run away. I believe they will play at beau peep with our people until they are all *exterminated*. We hear also that Wild Cat, who was sent for by Gov. to prevail on his brethren to return with him to the far west, passed through Alabama since, all painted, plumed, and armed for *war*.²⁶ He is a cunning Indian and I am surprised that after all his perfidy he should again be trusted in a matter of so vital moment. This concerns not us, however, "fight dog, fight bear, my dog went there"—I forgot George, but I don't believe he will be wiry enough to put himself in their way. . . .

Now I think of it, I will put you up a barrel of coco nuts fresh from the trees! I will direct them to the care of Mrs. Walker. I wish you had sent an address, but I will try & have them reach you. They will be in N.Y. in 5 days from this! I send them in the hull or outer shell as 'tis said they keep

26. Corinna was mistaken regarding Wild Cat's return to Florida. Federal authorities requested his support in urging Billy Bowlegs and the remaining Seminoles to emigrate west, but he refused and was not among the party. As Corinna wrote this letter, Wild Cat was moving his band of Seminoles from the Arkansas Territory to Mexico; Kenneth W. Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom Seeking People* (Gainesville, Fla., 1996), 127-28; Jane F. Lancaster, *Removal Aftershock: The Seminoles' Struggles to Survive in the West, 1836-1866* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1994), 80-86.

better. You must not eat too many of them at a time. The milk won't hurt you, they make nice *pies & puddings*. You must present Mrs. W. with a dozen from me & tell her if I were sure she would get them I would send her a barrel. When I come on I will bring these flower seeds. There are great varieties of cactus. . . . I can leave home better when Ell & Virginia are here. I should not be willing to leave Edward *all alone*, for any time.

I heard from George last mail, he had been to Charleston & hastened his return as the *bilous* & yellow fever prevailed there. I reckon G is making money! & I am glad of it. I want to see you & him independent. Poor Ed will never do more than make a living here unless he gets that Hospital & that I fear he is not politician enough to obtain. But political & influential friends may do it for him. You have no idea dear, of the rancorous feeling, the bitter envy, jealousy and all unkindness which influences these office seekers and holders. They would tear each other's eyes out to rob another of his office, or to turn out or put in one of their party. I am disgusted with them. Let them scramble on, 'tis a regular scramble business & I do not desire to see my husband in the mess. If he can by fair & open means obtain the appointment. I hope he may succeed—but on no other terms do I want it & I believe He who permits evil & punishes it and blesses those who trust in Him, will order all things right. . . .

Ever your. . . . sister
Corrina.

Corinna Aldrich, Key West, Florida, to Mannevillette Brown in Utica, New York, 17 April 1850, Anderson-Brown Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

Dear Manne ²⁷

Your letter to Ellen, as she is gone, I took the liberty of reading. I suppose ere this, you are in receipt of our last documents which explain the cause of her absence. We are

27. Corinna wrote this letter after a visit of several months to New York City, from which she returned in March of 1850. She and Ellen then decided to move to St. Marys, Ga., while Edward planned to move to California and send for Corinna after he had established his medical practice.

unluckily detained here, and probably will be, a few days longer, by contrary winds. We are daily expecting a packet the *Wassasea* (I think that is the name) bound to N.Y. We have sold out, bag and baggage (almost) and are now *at board* in the most *recherché* [exquisite] Hotel of the Island. My room is exquisite, having one window with two *panes* out, and six *pains* in. A white bottom curtain, an apology for one, hangs alone; draped in the middle by a bit of safe, in lieu of fancy, cord. . . . A sort of desk that once was fine but now usurped by rats & roaches constitutes our washstand with an odd bowl & Ewer—an old fashion card table, that trembles on its spindle legs, like some time worn veteran of eighty—yet telling of porcine wrath and piney in its bits of still adhering veneering while its double leaf assures us, that our ancestors also knew the hazard of a lie! An uneven floor all stained with grease & “backing,” an old chair that must have been upon the reef judging from its piebald aspect and an old hearth, or horse rug that also has smelt salt water, serves as a carpet. The walls are planked, if not paneled; while the wasps and spiders have tapestried them & trellised the rafters! I have long thought a good hotel would do a great business here & am now convinced of the fact—were it not for *pride* I would start one, it would be as good as California. Though I should have to get Edward out of [the] way. He says the last employment he would undertake would be to take boarders! Our present lodgings form a strong contrast even to the home we have just deserted—and that is the *crack* residence of the Island. We have a daguerreotype of it. I will show it to you sometime. Do you think you will be able to come to see us while in N.Y.? I can’t say when we will be there, however, all things now, are against us. We look out every day for a packet and trust there may be one this week. We have been ready now for ten days. I did not think, when Ellen left, the next trip of the *Isabel* would find us here. Yet it is so, she is in tonight from Savannah. My next I think will be dated from New York but you must not be [alarmed] if you do not hear from us as soon as you expect. We may be kept here a fortnight yet & may have long passage also, although at this time of year it is not probable. I have written George & shall endite an epistle to Ell. She will be very [surprised] to

learn me still here. She left in such a hurry, supposing we would also leave that week. But I have no doubt 'tis all wisely ordained and will be all right in the end. . .

Good bye dear Ever yours
Corrina

Corinna and Edward Aldrich arrived in New York in late April 1850. After purchasing drugs he intended to use in his medical practice, Edward set out for California alone, arriving in San Francisco in July. That same month, Ellen joined Corinna in New York City. Their plans to move to St. Mary's, Georgia, never materialized; Ellen decided to remain in New York City so the children could attend free public schools. Edward, discouraged by his inability to establish a profitable practice in California, never sent for Corinna, though he continued to hope he could do so until she became ill and died in the fall of 1854. Edward stayed in California for several years, but eventually returned to Florida, settling in Jacksonville and Lake City after the Civil War.²⁸

Ellen remained with her children in New York, struggling financially and accepting help from her brothers. In 1860 she arranged her son's appointment to West Point, but she urged him to resign after the election of Abraham Lincoln.²⁹ After leaving the academy, Edward Willoughby Anderson enlisted in the Confederate Army and was fighting in the Army of Northern Virginia when his mother died of breast cancer in New York City on August 5, 1862.³⁰ Edward survived the war, moved to Washington, and had a successful career as a patent attorney. He married twice, had six children, and died in 1915. His sisters, Corinna Georgia and Ellen Mannevillette, never married but lived with Edward's family until their deaths in 1874 and 1891, respectively. George Brown remained in Newnansville and married Matilda Stewart of South Carolina in 1851. Their daughter Adelaide was born in 1852, and Ellen was born in 1856. George died in October of 1857. Mannevillette Brown remained in Utica where he maintained a successful art career until his death in 1896.³¹

28. Hammond, *The Medical Profession in 19th Century Florida*, 8-9.

29. For more on Edward's brief and troubled career at West Point, see Francis P. Sullivan, "Letters of a West Pointer, 1860-1861," *American Historical Review* 33 (April 1928): 599-617.

30. Miss Mannevillette Sullivan genealogy materials, in possession of editors.

31. Courtney, "M. E. D. Brown, (1810-1896)," 76-77.