

1866

Transcriptions of Acca L. Colby Purdy and Warren G. Purdy correspondence

Acca L. Colby Purdy

Warren G. Purdy

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H. ROCHER, PHOTO.

CHICAGO.



Brownsville Jan 18th 1866

Dear Mother

Finding time very heavy on my hands thought I might as well write you a few lines and tell you how we finished our journey. I wrote you a few lines at Brazos so will commence from there. We left on the morning train and went to White Ranch a place about 15 miles from Brazos, found an Ambulance waiting for us and got aboard. When we found our team was not inclined to move there was a Negro Regiment stationed at the place and they all commenced beating the animals (four mules) when they started on a run and they following and whipping it was a novel sight I guess for the lookers on for they set off a shout that it seems to me I can hear it yet. After they were once on the way we got along very well and arrived hear about three in the afternoon. Found Mr. & Mrs. Plato well and glad to see us. He has wanted Warren very much I think for I heard him say there was not a clerk in the office that amounted to any thing. Well now about this place. I hardly know what to tell you from what I have seen I am not very favorably impressed with it. There are plenty of the Liberal class of Mexicans here but the most that I can make out of them is that they are a set of Guerriller Band and too lazy for anything in the world. It is dangerous to show yourself after dark in the street for they murder people for 50 cents here. It is only a few nights since they had a plot laid to kill Major Plato. They found out that he brought a good deal of money with him. There was a Mexican came to their room at the hotel after they were in bed and said that the General wanted to see him at his office. Plato got partly dressed to go but his wife persuaded him not to and the next day some one told him of the plot. I'm frightened to death if Warren does not come home at just such a time for he does not got any ammuniton as yet for his pistol - every one goes armed here. We stopped the first night at Millers Hotel where Major Plato and family are stopping self on the parlor floor but since then we have been staying here at Victors Restaurant pay \$35 a week board and 2.50 in specie for washing. You never saw any thing like it. Plato is paying \$50 a week at the hotel but has a great deal better accomadation than we do. I have got a miserable little room with an old oil cloth carpet that is full of holes and the dirt a foot thick underneath it. A cot bedstead two cane seat chairs just ready to fall to pieces a shelf in the corn for a wash stand. If I had not brought our little looking glass we should not have had any. The food is so French that we can not it all we get good is the beef and that I never saw equaled at home. Just as tender as chicken and as sweet as can be. But don't imagine I'm homesick not in the least we shall get fixed in a room very soon and can then draw rations enough to live on all except luxuries and those we cannot get until we can get to Matamoras. I am in hopes the Liberals will take it every day and then they will call upon our troops to protect its citizens and then we shall have troops stationed there and can go back and forward just as we choose there is an American in Matamoras worth over a million dollars. He was over and took dinner with Plato the day we stopped there and he has closed up himself got his store shut up and money locked in safe just waiting until the place is taken. The soldiers pillaged everything they can get hands on at Bagdad and it was full of handsome jewelry silks and a great quantity of diamonds. Matamoras is just as well off but the citizens will take care of their valuables there as much as possible for they are expecting a fight and can prepare for it.

There are some rooms in the same building with Warren's office which I think we can have soon the Quarter Master that Plato relieved is occupying them now but will

soon leave for Washington if not they have some lumber and will build some houses for us. We want to get somewhere as soon as we can for we are paying now just as much as Warren is earning for our living. I wish mother you would make Fannie take a pencil some night and write me down a lot of receipts for cooking for maybe I shall be house keeper and want them. In fact, if we do not live with Plato's folks we think of having a Mess that is Warren and I and the clerks there will be about three or four I suppose. There is an old Darkie woman living there with them now who does the cleaning and takes care of the rooms who would stay with me I think, but they hire a Mexican to cook for them and pay him \$10 a month. I do not imagine I could eat anything he was to cook any way and then I do not think we could afford to pay quite as much as that for a cook so some evening when you are sewing make her write me some receipts. I want receipts for all the different kinds of soups you know how to make except Oyster I think I can remember that – your way of making bread too and all kinds of cake that you make and if you see Manda make her give you her receipt over for fruit cake. I can make all kinds of pie I believe except your new rules for Lemon and Cream. Lemons are very cheap here and you know I have a fondness for them. Kinds of pie your pancakes of buckwheat. Tell me if when you first start them if you don't use yeast.

Write me anything you think of that I don't for they live well down here and I don't want them to complain of my housekeeping if Warren should form a mess with them. I would prefer that to living with Plato's family I think but don't know. Now don't forget to write me a long letter and tell me all the news for it seems a month since I left home.

Everybody write to me and don't wait for me I will send a letter to some one of you about so often anyway and you can all read it and imagine it to you. Fan you have nothing else to do so just go to work with your pen tell me all about Sully and when he is coming home I have not written to him yet for I thought perhaps he had got there before this time. How is Nuck and have they gone to housekeeping yet. – tell me everything. How is Mrs. Foss and Hattie.

We received a letter from Sallie today written the 2nd of Jan she must be more prompt than the rest of you.

I will go into the yard and pick some leaves and send you just so you can see how nice it is here just like May for all the world. I have a leaf that I picked at Memphis the 28th of December that I thought was wonderful but it was nothing like this country. Roses were in bloom when we came through New Orleans and the wild flowers were in blossom all along the road when we came from Brazos. Must close with love to all not forgetting the little ones. Mother how are you now days. Do you feel any better then when we left. With lots of love as ever your affectionate Daughter Acca

(At the top of first page “ If you have anything to send down McLauburgh and Bacon are coming immediately. You can find them at the old office or McLauburgh at 480 N. LaSalle) – written in Warren's hand.

Letter No 1
Brownsville, Feb 3rd 1866
Saturday 12 M

Dear Father & Mother,

I received my first news from home yesterday and as there is a steamer in port thought I had better answer it now. I had begun to think you had forgotten me, but was happily disappointed. Your letter is dated the 11th of January as it was almost three weeks on the road. After this when you write please number your letter the same as I have commenced doing mine and then we can tell whether there has been any lost or not.

That programme of the funeral services of those battling boys was very interesting to me I would have liked very much to have attended the meeting. Nuck of course was there as well as all the rest of the Company. I'm glad they are going to housekeeping hope they will be fixed nicely. I wrote them a long letter the other day, hope they will answer soon and give me all particulars about every thing how Meal enjoyed her Christmas etc.

We had another letter from Sallie yesterday with yours and they came from Galveston on a Government tug boat. We are expecting a large mail today direct from New Orleans the telegraph news came in last night that the steamer "St Marys" was at Brazos Santiago and that the river steamer "Tampico" had left with the mail for Brownsville so we are looking for her arrival every moment. Our little telegraph line is splendid I think we always know in half an hour when there has a steamer arrived and in time to send the mail down before she leaves. We are living splendid now we moved into our room here in the Pay Master's department a week ago today and Warren's office is on the next street west so all I have to do to go to my meals is to pass through the back way to their building. The mess room is adjoining their offices - they have a French cook that is splendid we live as well as at a first class hotel and it does not cost a great deal either about \$2.00 a day for both of us beside Warren's rations. We do not expect to live there a great while longer but will join Major Pearce (the pay master) and his Chief Clerk here in the house. We have got a nice ~~back~~ ^{place} here and the gentlemen are very kind to me I was over to Matamoras the other day with Major Pearce and bought me a riding dress mean to have it finished as I can go riding by Monday night Warren has got two horses for our use and we expect to have five times - Night before last we attended a Mexican ball given in Market Hall by the Liberal Officers - there was all the big bug Mexicans there, beside all our officers with Generals with their Staff among the rest General Clark formerly Adj General of the Army of the Mississippi - He called here the afternoon before the party I was introduced to him and he got to speaking of Gen Giles A. Smith and McPherson. When I remarked that I had a brother who had served under their command he wanted to know who he was, and I told him he belonged to Battery A he knew all about the battery and said it was a great pet among the Generals. I had a splendid time at the party they are very dressy here these Mexican ladies wear the handsomest silks that I ever saw. I wore my purple skirt with my wedding dress waist. I guess I compared favorably with the other Northern ladies present - by the way we got ourselves in the paper the other day. You will notice in that Ranchero Warren sent to you that the Imperialists in Matamoras speak of every thing on this side of the river as our Green back friends or neighbors - the next day after I was over there with Major Pearce they came out with a pierce and said "they noticed some of the green back ladies over

their promenading commercial street as smiling as usual spending their money loosely". We passed the Rancho Office just as the editor was entering and the Major told me who he was. There was a party from our hotel here, over the same day I believe but we did not meet them. The Major took us to dinner over there and they charged him \$7.00 in Specie for it. He made me a present of a little pearl case something like what Sally brought home to me. Warren has been so busy that he has not been over yet, but we are going to get up early Monday morning and go over before office hours – there are a No. of little things that I want to get among the rest some calico dresses, it is so warm here that I am really uncomfortable. It is just like June for all the work I am fixing my muslins so I can wear them. I got a very heavy priced of thibet cloth for my riding dress and am going to trim it with the small Staff Officers buttons. Mr. Butts (Pay Masters Chief Clerk) gave me enough for it. Major Pearce and Mr. Butts are both married men, their wives are in Rhode Island. They are real nice men. We got acquainted with them on the boat coming from Galveston. Mrs. Plato is still at the hotel but expects to move soon.

I don't think of any thing more to tell you about myself so will close by making inquiries of all at home. I will answer Mrs. Foss today so as to send it off with this. I am glad that Hattie is so much better. How does Fan get along at school tell her I think she might write to me. Warren sent Pa a Rancho and I sent letters to you all in the same envelop. Hope you will get it all right. Warren thinks he is going to do well here he has chances to make a good deal outside of his pay if he chooses. Major Potter has not gone away yet and the property has not been transferred which worries him a good deal.

Must close with love to you all – you must all write as often as you can. Pa we want to hear from you soon. Your affectionately

Acca L. Purdy

Letter No 2

Brownsville Texas

Feb 12th 1866

Dear Father & Mother,

As there is a steamer at Brazos which leaves tomorrow morning thought I would send off a short letter but am very sorry that I have not one from you to answer. There has been two steamers in lately without bringing me a letter from home but other letters that we received have kind of consoled us for the disappointment. The first brought us three letters one from William one from Sallie and one from Georgie Abbott and tonight there was another came from Sallie and one from Sully. He writes me that he has gone to the City of Savannah to be mustered out before returning home. How much I wish I could be there to see him. He is at home by this time I suppose hope he got there in time to receive the letter that I sent him in that package of letters that I sent home to you all. I expect to receive a large mail in answer very soon. Sully writes that he has made up his mind to go to school for a while. I'm so glad of it I hope he will improve the time and learn all he can during his term for it will probably be the last of his school days. Tell him to write me in answer to the letters I sent and I will send him another soon.

We have got nicely settled here now and are enjoying ourselves hugely, but I'm afraid we shall have to stay here through the summer but it seems to be a pretty healthy place we have a good fresh breeze here most all the time but in the middle of the day it is pretty hot. I can hardly believe the stories Georgie tells of how cold you have been having it there she says that it was impossible to keep warm in their sitting room wher e they have a very large coal stove. I'm afraid you suffered in that awful cold house unless you have made some different arrangements from what you had last winter. Today it has been like June, I never saw such weather at home. We have not had a real good rain since we have been here.

Warren bought me a very nice saddle the other day and whip. I finished my dress tonight and we took our first ride this evening accompanied by Mr. Butts Chief Clerk of the Pay Master here. I expect to have jolly times now while I stay. The officers here are going to keep up the club parties that they have been having so once in two weeks we shall go to them I suppose. I attended the funeral of one of our couriers who was hung while carrying dispatches to Brazos by the Liberals. He had been missing a week before he was found. Every body went to his funeral I believe the Mason buried him. There has not been any one murdered very lately.

We have scouting parties out nearly all the time and instead of sending couriers off alone they go in pairs. I can hardly realize that we are in such a place but when we hear of a soldier being murdered during the night within the limits of the city it looks very much like a reality. Warren is waiting to post this so must close with love to all your daughter

Acca

Brownsville Feb. 20th 1866
Tuesday 8 PM

Dear Father and Mother,

Having nothing to do tonight and as we are expecting a steamer in every day thought I might as well write a few lines, not that I ever expect to hear from home again, but thought perhaps you would like to hear from me.

I have just returned from the pleasantest horseback ride I had yet, it is a very pleasant evening. We went out about four miles and cut all around the country, went in all about ten miles had a splendid time. Came home and had some "Claret" and now feel first rate. We are getting to be real old tossers here. Brandy wine, Gin and Whiskey flow a great deal freer than water. Warren sits here botering me says to tel{Mother to remember him kindly to the next cream pies she makes that he is good for just eight.

And to also ask Pa if he has seen anything of the Brazos stage up there for it has been missing since morning or rather the morning stage that left here at nine o'clock has not been seen at Whites Rancho and is suppose to have been stopped on the road by the Guerrillas. We had our first party last night of our new (Ren, has stopped to take a drink.)

(Written in Warren's hand - Judging by the number of glasses of Claret Punch Ren is consuming I guess you will have to wait until tomorrow for the remainder of this document. Warren G)

I have just been having some wine as Warren has informed you and will not try and finish about the parties. We had a very pleasant gathering just enough to make it pleasant I believe they are going to try and keep them up so as to have about time every month regularly - Feb 23 Friday 7:30 PM

For some reason I did not finish this letter the other evening but don't think that it was on account of the "Punch" I took. We have had a very disagreeable week so far. Has been raining for three or four days steadily. Yesterday it being Washingtons birthday the officers here thought they must celebrate it with honor. They called upon every one in town that they wanted to attend and raised about one thousand dollars got evergreens and all the flags in the place and the ladies met with the committee yesterday forenoon and decorated the hall very finely and last evening we had the finest party that has ever been in Brownsville. I enjoyed it hugely but feel very tired and cross this evening, am going to bed very soon and hope in the morning I shall feel better. Warren is playing dominoes in the next room with Major Pearce and party. I do not know when he will be time to write that letter to you that he has been promising so long. Must close Good Night

Ever your daughter Acca

Brownsville Tex.
Febry 25, 1866
Sunday 7 PM

Dear Father

As I promised to write you and have until this time neglected to do so I will improve a few moments in endeavouring to give an account of myself and family. We have not heard from you but once though it has been just two months since we left Chicago. We have not had a steamer from New Orleans in about 9 days consequently we have had no mail in that time. Ren feels awful blue unless she hears from her mother or some one of the family by every boat but her trouble does not last long I am happy to say. She stands life in the frontier first rate everyone says she appears to be the happiest American lady here. She has a horse and equipments and goes riding 2 or 3 times a week and would spend more than half her time on horseback if I would go with her but I have been so busy since I came here that I have not had time to do anything but attend to business things here in the QM Dept were badly mixed when we took hold, and I have had pretty tough work to get any decent clerks, have discharged two this month for getting drunk. I have about a dozen clerks altogether and they are about as poor stock as any one need want but they are the best we can get and I am working them for all they are worth. We sent two Chicago for two of our old clerks but Wm wrote me they were not coming I have not heard from them yet but expect to by the next steamer (which ought to be here with a day or two). We have a big thing to run here and need them badly. run

I have been to a Spanish Bull fight (don't let the women folks know it) this afternoon in Matamoras it was a big thing about 50 of us "Green back sidlers" (as the Mexicans call us) went over just for the novelty of the thing paid our 75 cents in specia and went into the show. Gen'l Majia (Maha) was present and any numbers of Imperial officers. The bulls were brought into the ring and a lot of fellows shook red blankets at them until they got the bulls pretty mad and then a Mexican on horseback lassoed them. The bulls made two or three of the men feel pretty sick before it was over. One man was thrown about twelve feet into the air by one of the aforesaid animals in coming down he lit on dangerous ground (the bull's horns) and was sent up again coming down the second time he was tossed around. A "few" and had to be carried off the field and I guess he has gone to the land of promise by this time but that's no matter seeing he is a Mexican - Moral - Mexicans should not fool with Bull's - altogether I guess the show was a success we had any quantity of the bon ton Spanish ladies present who seemed to enjoy the sport.

Matamoras is a devil of a town all the buildings are one story brick and look more like barns than like houses. The River here is not more than 150 yds wide. Matamoras is about ¾ mile farther down the River than Brownsville and we have to take a cab from the ferry to reach the city.

It is a pity our folks would not get up a fight and capture the damed town there is lots of good things over there that would fall into possession of the QM D.

I don't see there is any chance for you to make a fortune in this Country and should not advise you to come unless you would get a pretty good chance if you should come to Indianola with Tobey & Booth you must be sure to come down here and we will have a good time. We always have plenty of good liquor most of which we smuggle across the river. They have "shut down" a good deal on the smuggling business but I am hunky with one of Gen'l Majia staff and can get what ever I choose passed over.

We had quite a celebration here on the night of 28th. We raised about a thousand dollars and had a military ball that was pretty gay. I guess the gayest thing that has ever happened in Brownsville. Everything passed off first rate except one man being murdered in the market house (our hall is just over the market) and I lost my hat or rather it was stolen. The man did not amount to much as he was only a Mexican but my hat was a loss as it was the only one I had I was to 2 balls last week. We have lots of fun here. Now while I am writing the Negroes are holding a camp meeting and yelling for mercy sake. We have the military prison within about 50 yards of our house and the prisoners are yelling in chorus with the pious Negroes; during the day and evening some of the bans are playing most all the time or else we have music from a hand organ. We have any quantity of murders here for a change and everything considered we have quite a time. I must dry up as I find I have used up about all of Ren's writing paper my regards to everybody to be continued in our next if you answer this pretty quick and give me all the news.

Yours affect Son

Warren G

(6)

Brownsville, Texas

Plato's Ranche, March 13th (1866)

Thursday 5:30 PM

Dear Parents,

We are expecting a steamer every day now so thought I would commence a letter to you so it would be all ready to send when she arrives.

I believe I wrote you in my last that we were going to housekeeping. We have a nice cottage homes very much the shape of the Pay Masters house where we have been living of which I sent you a diagram. We have one large front room and Plato's folks have the other we each have a front door opening on piazza and doors from each room on the back porch. Our kitchen is in the rear about ten feet from the house. We have no dining room as yet but if we remain here intend having one built between the kitchen and back piazza. The reason I say "if we remain" is that Plato's folks have had a nice little brick house offered them until the first of October free of rent. They will take I think it will be finished in about two weeks and then they will decide I suppose. I hardly think we will go with them for the house is about large enough for one family. We can return to our room that we left to come up here. I shall not care very much only for the moving and trouble would not care at all. I think it would be healthier here through the summer but do not think we need worry about that very much. I was over to Matamoras yesterday and was weighed. I brought down the usual amount for me (150 lbs). We had a real nice time there. I bought me silk for a new . I have been uncomfortable ever since I came here with my heavy cloak, but what troubles me most is how to make it up. You have no idea how much I miss your sewing machine. I hate to make up anything and don't think I will except just what I need to wear here. Linens in Matamoras is very cheap and before I go home I mean to have a lot of them. Mrs. Plato got one of 32 yds for \$12 dollars and another of 42 yds for \$16 dollars. The \$16 piece was very nice and fine as fine as we often get for bosoms. She got 7 yds of very fine almost a linen for four dollars this you will remember is in species but we get greenbacks changed at .75 there is a rich merchant in Matamoras an American who fought on the Mexican war and has lived here ever since. He is very wealthy owns his millions and he is changing all his specia into greenbacks with the intention of holding them until they are at par. The country is in such a state that they cannot do very much business. Everything there is so different from what it is at home. They have no banks but each man is his own banker and they have their stores bolted and have to keep out bad company and in fact every dwelling house has all its windows with heavy iron bars just as the crazy girls windows are arranged at the County Home it gives the place an awful dull and somber appearance. We had an invitation to attend the Theater there tonight but it is so wet and stormy that we cannot go. Our invite was from an old batchelor as rich as Croesns he has a private box at the theater all the time so you see we should have had seats among the nobility. We attended a party last night here in Brownsville at Millers Hotel. We had a very pleasant party the officers here seem to want to keep them up and I don't know but we shall dance all summer. I am enjoying myself first rate and will be contented to live here awhile longer. The only thing I regret is that I'm afraid I will be cheated out of my trip East this summer. How is it Mother have you given up going? You do not say anything about it in your letters. You know our stay here is very indefinite. We may remain a year and may not more than two months cannot tell anything about it. The white troops

have been all mustered out and will leave as fast as they can get transportation to New Orleans and everything looks as if they would close up this post before long but even if they do that the Q.M. will be the last one to leave and it would take some time to get through on the whole I have about given up the idea of going east this summer but we cannot tell what good luck will befall us so live in hopes.

I must tell you of a little adventure we had last Sunday afternoon we four started out in an ambulance to visit the review of troops on the Plaza. After they got through we started for home of the roads leading out of town the San Antonio road I think and when we were out about three miles out and just before a turn in the road we happened to look in the direction that the road would carry us too and saw six Mexicans run down a small hill through the chapparell into the road ahead of us. We just saw them in time to turn around and put for home. Warren now the major had written one their revolvers with them so we would have been completely at their mercy if they had got us. The next evening there was a whole party of us went over the same road on horseback and fully armed but saw nothing of them. Mrs. Plato and I have both got revolvers and Warren and the Major have these large revolvers over a foot long and carry a very large ...

I got a letter from Fannie which I must answer tonight. We have been so busy getting settled that I have neglected my correspondents so shall have to hurry up to get them caught up. I am expecting a host of letters on the next steamer and hope I won't be disappointed. Will leave room and tell you from whom I get letters I think it is about time I heard from Cousin Henry and Nuck and Meal.

March 11th – The Cresant is at Brazos and will leave early tomorrow so I must finish this off. We have just returned from a horseback party and it is nine o'clock. Good night and much love to all the friends at home and tell Sully not to forget to answer my letter.

Acca L. Purdy

(7)

Here searching for the assassins -
Sunday Morning April 8th (1866)

Warren says the Clinton is off the bar at Brazos so I must finish this up and write what other letters that I want to this afternoon for she will probably leave tomorrow or next day. The mail she bring to us poor benighted mortals will be here by night. How much I wish there could be half a dozen long letters from home for me.

That shooting affair the other night did not amount to a great deal. The patrol failed to find the men, but our folks don't stay out very much after dark now days and don't think lodge is worth going to any more. There were three of the villains they think although it was so dark they could not distinguish anything. It was cold and rainy as they had their ambulance curtains all buttoned down. It was like being in prison. The two shots fired at them were sent in the front of the ambulance they saw the flashes but was driving as fast that they were passed them before they hardly realized it. Mr. Butts (Chief Clerk to the Pay Master where we used to live) was on horseback and about fifty yards behind them when he came up they threw the lasso at him just grazing his hat and shoulder. He said he saw two men and one on each side of the road be fired at them right and left, and went on to town to the Provost Marshall's office and then they all came back to us for they knew we would hear the shots and be frightened. The distance from here to town is about three quarters of a mile. The first quarter from here there is quite thick chappard growing, but it is settled all along of course the inhabitants are all Mexicans or greasers but it was a bold thing for there are patrols all around near where they were concealed. The night was just right for it, it deadened the sound of the pistols so we did not hear them at all. Our darkies heard them in the kitchen. Plato had no revolver. Warren had his little one but could not use it they were shut up so we are going to move in town the first of next month I think. The Major has a very nice little cottage building for him. I don't know where we shall go yet.

Warren likes here very much and thinks he could do well by staying I do not mind these little occurrences on the whole rather like them it is something to relieve the motony.

I want to go to Matamoras again the Major has promised to take us over tomorrow. I am going to buy some linen. You never heard of such bargains. A very fine piece what we would pay 1.50 a yard for we can get a web of 45 yds for \$16 in Specia. We buy specia at .75 cents a heavier web of 32 yds for \$12. Don't you think that often did it is a great deal cheaper than cotton. I paid thee and six pence a yard for cotton in Specia. Mrs. Plato got herself half a dozen towels for 3.50 little over 50 cents a piece. They are a great deal larger and better than those paid a dollar a piece for when I was married. Some things are very cheap there others are dear we get those handsome French combine robes for 3.50 a pattern and linen lawns are very reasonable.

Well mother I have wrote you quite a long letter now I think you might answer me right away and tell me all the news how hard you have to work and under what difficulties to labor in fact tell me all about you and the rest at home.

Do you have those awful headaches anymore and how is your health in general. We are fat ragged and sasy as usual in good health and affairs Warren says all I want is to see my grandmother. I've at him so much about going east that they use it for a bye word good by

Affectionately yours
Acca L.

Office Supervising Quartermaster
District of the Rio Grande
Brownsville, Texas April 12, 1866

Dear Dad –

Having had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you by last steamer and there being a steamer at Brazos now which will sail for New Orleans direct tomorrow PM I will endeavour to forward you a short epistle – We are OK only Ren's bowels are slight out of order. A crowd of us including she and Mrs. Plato went to Brazos and back last Tuesday riding about 55 miles horseback in one day which is enough in my opinion to disarrange any woman's bowels – They stood it first rate – and we had a gay time though the sun was pretty warm and proved almost too much for Ren's head.

I sent you by last steamer a pack of Mexican Monte Cards which I obtained in Matamoras – I also sent you a copy of the Rio Grande Courier containing an account of a little affair in which the undersigned figured rather more extensively than is absolutely necessary in order to enjoy health and be happy – There are parties here who have been on the track of Plato and I for some time. They have an idea that the QM Dept has lots of money and they "hanker after" the safe keys but we don't let everybody know which one of us has them so they "go for" both of us –

If they do catch us we will be comparative worthless except as a fertilizer and if we catch them, we will give cause for their friends to attend a funeral –

We had no chance to fire at them the night we were attacked – it being very dark, and drizzling rain – besides our ambulance curtains both sides and rear were tightly closed. We are indebted for our lives to presence of mind and a pair of good horses – it don't speak very well for their proficiency as marksman to have them hoot twice at us within distance of 10 feet without killing any one –

The Imperials and Liberals were fighting all day yesterday – within 15 miles of here. The liberals are trying to get Matamoras and the Imperials went out to meet them – I say let them fight they are all a set of low lived cusses – and if they can kill each other let them "go in" I have seen enough of both parties to disgust any white swan – though I know officers of each side who are good fellows-

As it approaches the hour of 2 at which time the women expect us to report to our "Ranche" for grub. I must dry up.

Hoping to hear from you soon I remain yours as ever

Warmly

Ren wrote to her mother by last steamer

WG

Brownsville Texas Apr 12 (1866)
Thursday 7:30 PM

Dear Sister,

I received your letter some time since, but this is the first opportunity to answer. I wrote mother last week and the Monday we went to Brazos and took it down. There was a party of seven of us. We left here on horseback at seven in the morning arrived at White Ranche at ten a distance of twenty-five miles there we found the train waiting for us and proceeded to Brazos remained until three in the afternoon and then started back left White's Ranche at five and got home about eight. We call that pretty good riding. Fifty miles on horseback in about six hours for green horns will do very well I think and the most surprising thing of all was that we were neither blistered or lamed. I felt as well the next day as I ever did. We made pockets in our riding dresses for a little six shooter but had no occasion to use it. Take it all around we had a glorious time.

I am sorry that you did not send me that long letter you had written the many I hear from home the better I feel would be willing that it should be all about Mr. Porter and your school if you choose to write on those subjects. You must remember that I have been gone for a number of months and haven't had my share of your evening recitations. So must insist that hereafter I am to have my rights. I wrote Mother a long letter full of nonsense I expect for I can hardly remember a word. We have had three steamers arrive within a week there are two at Brazos now, one of them we have not received the mail from yet. I hope it will have half a dozen for me. I am writing for Warren to come home and bring them to me. We received a letter from Sallie today in almost every letter she speaks of having written you but says nothing of receiving any answer. I'm afraid you are delinquent with your correspondents be sure you do not use me so badly. I must write to Sully by this boat. I got a letter from him by the last steamer before these. I would like to be home now so much you are all at home now but me. I wonder if Nuck and Meal ever received a letter from me I begin to think it most time I heard from it, just mention my opinion sometime when you go to see them/

We had fresh blackberries yesterday I paid a dollar in Specia for half a water bucket full. They went splendid I tell you. I got a letter from Georgia last week. They were all well and preparing to go east next summer they will go next month or the first of June certain I expect. I wish Mother and I were ready to go but we cannot tell here what a day may bring forth so I still hope I may go around to Washington in time to visit New England this summer. Warren gave a friend of ours (Capt. Pritchard) a letter of introduction to William and requested him to take him around to see you. He has got there by this time and gone on perhaps to New York I hope you will all be looking nice. Well must say good night Warren joins in love to you and all the rest of the family.

Your sister,

Acca L. Purdy

Brownsville Texas May 6th (1866)

Dear Father,

We received by the last steamer two letters from you and one from Sully. Both of your letters speak of Mother getting ready to go East and by this time suppose she has gone. I am so glad and I hope I shall be able to meet her there sometime during the summer. I do not know what to do about writing her to Malden but think I will as there can be no doubt but that she is there. You spoke of what was to become of you all during her absence except the little ones so conclude that they all three go with Mother it will be hard for her to travel with them all but she will be more contented to stay if they are with her.

I hope you will be able to build while she is gone. This eternal rent paying is enough to kill anyone. You stored the goods of course somewhere I will get all the particulars in the next letter I suppose and will then know just how you are all fixed hope you will get a good place to board. Fannie will be nearer her school and will have a jolly time with Cousin Laura.

When we go North we expect to go through Chicago but will not be able to stay more than two or three days if we do that long – I hope, and we some expect to be able to leave here in about six weeks or two months. Warren will probably go to Washington with the Major if his business keeps him there a great while I'm going to elope and go up to N.H.

We are getting along finely here have been very well ever since our arrival, the only thing that worries me is our moving around so much. We moved back into the town tomorrow, we go to boarding in a private family at \$80 dollars a month. Mr. and Mrs. Plato have a very nice little Cottage House with two rooms just large enough for them.

You must excuse me from writing more tonight but I'm eat up with fleas mill add more to this if I have time before the steamer goes.

(unsigned but written by Acca)

Brownsville May 11th (1866)

Dear Father

As there is a steamer here which will leave tomorrow carrying our mail to New Orleans thought I might as well write a few lines as my last was sent off in a hurry before I had time to finish it up. We moved from our country place here last Tuesday have rather a small room but get along with it all right. The living will do very well and I don't have to work in the kitchen this hot weather which is quite a relief to both of us. I know it seems very pleasant to me and from Warren's actions think it does to him.

Since writing the above I have been with a party to play a game of "Croquet" which is very fashionable in the East I suppose Chicago has followed the fashion by this time and all the young ladies are crazy over the game. Warren has had me a set made so I shall bring them home with me – which by the way I hope will be in about six weeks. The "Clinton" brought the Major news that his request to be relieved had been looked upon favorably and that Col. Sartell had telegraphed to Washington for a Q. M. to relieve him and we think that another month will see him down here. Warren says it will take him twenty days to transfer property after his arrival. Major Plato received the promotion to Brevet Colonel about a week ago it dates from March 13th 1865, the same day of our marriage. We shall go through Chicago but it will be a flying trip I expect, I wish I could stop long enough to use Mother's sewing machine a little, write me what she done with it. I hope no one has it that don't understand using it – I shall expect to hear by the next steamer where Mother has gone or not and all about her starting and whether she took all the little ones with her or not. I like this country here ever so much and don't know but what Warren will return here next fall again. He has had good offers to remain every lady that is rich here is very rich or rather whoever lives here and has any energy about them gets very wealthy but there are only about one out off (sic) a hundred. These greasers that we speak of are natives of Mexico about one save Mexican and the other Indian and all they know is to sleep, eat and drink and murder whoever they fancy to save a dime about them – but we have made the acquaintance of a few pure Spanish families that are perfect ladies and gentleman and they are all very wealthy. We attended a party the other night at one of their house, it was the occasion of christening two children and a house that had just been completed. Their manner of receiving company is very nice I think. We were of course green horns at being the first party that I had attended at a private residence. As soon as we appeared at the door one of the family stepped right up to us and offered us his arm leaving our husbands to go into the gentleman room and conducted us to the ladies room as soon as we came from there the same person took us into the parlor and introduces us to the family, then the God Father and Mother came around and each ~~give~~ a gold dollar to your there were about one hundred guests present this evening and they each receive the present after the company had all arrived we had music and dancing and supper. Champaign flows as freely in this country as water almost. I forgot to mention that before we commenced dancing we went to the dining room and partook of Mexican Chocolate and cake. This chocolate I never saw anything to equal it in the shape of drink, it is perfectly splendid-

I am going to call on the family next Monday evening I think if Warren will go they are one of the oldest families at Matamoras, there is a branch of them living on this side who are in favor of the Liberal soldiers and those that live in Matamoras of course on account of their property are good subjects of Maximillian they are all educated to

speaking English so it is pleasant for me as I could converse with them I enjoyed it hugely. The young man Mr. or Senor Trevenaio has paid me considerable attention at all our parties and I did not know who he was and have always refused to dance with him as I had no introduction but their customs are that if they are invited to a party, they have the privilege of addressing any other invited guest without introduction and he has asked me half a dozen times to dance with him but I never did until the other evening at his house. I was very much surprised to find myself the guest of the little Spaniard that had been addressing me before – Warren carried on quite a flirtation with his sister-in-law and I have been expecting ever since that her husband would challenge him – he is awfully jealous of her does not allow anyone to look at her if he can help it, one of the family was killed in a duel a short time ago, just on account of getting jealous.

Well I've written nonsense enough will close by giving love to all – tell Fan if I don't have time to write her to get her clothes all fixed up that perhaps I shall bring her some sewing to do when I come home. Love to all friends and lots for yourself

Your daughter

Acca

Brownsville, Texas June 10th (1866)
 Sunday morning 9 o'clock

Dear Mother,

Although there is no steamer in port I will try and write you and then I shall be sure and have a letter ready to send when she does arrive. We expect the "Crescent" will be reparted off Brazos to day. She is over her time now so we are looking for her everyday. Mr. and Mrs. Plato have been at Brazos a number of day, their little girl has been very sick and they went there to bathe her in the salt water – if she does not improve I would not be surprised if they went North by another steamer and left Warren to close up here. We shall all be ready to leave by the 25th of the month probably, if you answer this letter you had better direct it to Chicago for I do not think it would reach me even at New Orleans. We shall make a very short stay at home not more than two or three days and from there I would like to go directly to Philadelphia and this by way of New York to Boston and Campton. I shall make very short stop until I arrive at Grandmother for the friends at Lowell and Boston we can see on our return. This is the route I would like very much to take but Warren's mother would never forgive me I don't think if I was to pass her when so near as I would be at Harrisburg, so I hardly know what to do but think that probably I shall run down to Baltimore for a few days and then go directly to N.H. The best I can possibly do I expect it will be the last of July before I am with you. We can return in two weeks to Chicago and allowing another week before we get to Baltimore and another week to arrive at Boston. So think I cannot possibly be with you until four weeks from the time we leave here. I have been very busy sewing since we left off keeping house have got me a new linen traveling dress very nearly done, besides other thin dresses for the summer. I have me a new silk and my purple needs making over very badly but I shall leave them all and have them made in Boston, am coming on with nothing but plain clothes and have my nice things made there. You would laugh to see the styles of dress here but we receive the ladies books every month so can keep posted as to your northern fashions. I am doing my hair up in the coil but do not wave the front as yet from the fact that I most always forget to put on my crimpers at night.

We were out riding yesterday went way out of town some five miles, passed a number of "Greaser" populations but they offered no violence.

The most brutal murder that we have heard of yet happened about a week ago. Dr. Morse the medical director of this district was going out to some of the Ranches out of town to visit a patient with only one orderly and unarmed. The orderly was a little way behind and when he came around a bend in the road saw three Mexicans standing over the Dr. They had lassoed him and then executed him. They fired a No of shots after the orderly but he escaped from them and got back to town. There were about fifty persons started right out and they found the body dragged to one side of the road and then pursued the murderers. They over took them about fifteen miles off and brought them here. They are now lying in jail awaiting their trial – There was a soldier executed here last Friday for murder. I was never so near an execution before and never want to be again. Our house that we board in is right on one corner of the plaza or like Grandpa's house and the old common in Campton. The gallows was erected in the center of that but there were two very large trees that hid it from my windows but by stepping onto the front porch we were within full view. I watched the military assemble when the

procession with the prisoner came in sight retreated to my room they passed right in front of the house so I saw the prisoner in the cart it was an awful sad thing. I heard the drop distinctly for I know the sound. Col. Plato took us out there one evening in the carriage and raised and lowered it a number of time to see that it was all right. I knew the sound at once and you don't know how it made me feel. Warren stood on the porch and saw it all. I went out and saw the body hanging it was a terrible sight and one that I will never be any where near again. There are three men to be hung on the 22nd of this month if we do not get away I shall go away from home. Although these are Mexicans and I would not feel so bad to see them go as I did this poor soldier – Warren is not feeling very well today and has been at home all the morning and lying in bed. He took some medicine last night and it has left him feeling rather weak. We have both enjoyed very good health ever since we came here and I think Texas one of the healthiest places in the United States. Although we are in the poorest part of it it is very pleasant and healthy here. I do not feel the heat here as much I don't think as I do at home for there is always a cool breeze blessing. It is not pleasant to go out in the middle of the day for the sun is so powerful but by four o'clock in the afternoon it is cool and delightful and we rest good all night. You know at home sometimes it is so oppressive at night we cannot sleep, but no one is troubled that way here on the whole think I can be contented to live here for about five years if Warren should be doing very well in his business. I am expecting a letter from you by every steamer. I want to hear so much of how you stood your journey and how you have left things at home for Pa never writes anything of what I want to know and by the way I will tell you a secret if you promise not to write any thing about it. So Warren has had Pa a cane made of ebony taken from the battle field of the "Resaca" in this last war too – Col Ford who fought the last battles of his was is living here in Brownsville and I like him ever so much as a perfect gentleman and he says he fought for principle although he knew from the first that the South would never win, and he told them so from the first. He is an old Indian fighter and knows every by path all through Texas. We visit at their house and they come and see us and it would do you good to hear him talk.

Well I think I have spun out quite a yarn but let me see I forgot to finish about the cane. Warren had a plain silver top put on it with "Enoch Colby from W.G. P." we thought Pa would prize it coming from the place it did even if it was not so very handsome. We would have liked to had a gold head but could not afford it hardly – Hoping you will receive this all right and answer me to Chicago. I am as every Your affectionate Daughter Acca

Love to all the relatives and friends. Grandma more than all the rest.

Brownsville Texas June 16 (1866)

Dear Sister,

Received your letter last evening was very glad to hear from you, but hardly know what to make out of you. Think you must certainly be crazy on the subject of "Porter". The services you described must have been very interesting and I have no doubt he is a very smart man, but Fan don't place him too high for fear he might fall and then you would very much disappointed with your idol.

I think of him more as a human being liable to all kinds of faults like ourselves and then if he should do any thing wrong you would not be so shocked at its coming from him. His Uncle leaves for the North on the same boat with this letter. I was in hopes we would have gone together but can not.

You are almost through with your third year and I hope you will finish with high honors you never told me how you stood in your classes-

Be a good girl while Mother is gone and do not give Auntie any trouble am glad you are enjoying yourself so much.

I have not heard a word from Enoch and wife since I have been here I have been trying to think if I said not any thing to them that offended them in any way - hope not for I certainly had no intention of doing so.

Excuse shortness of this and you need not answer as we follow this on the next boat, which will be in about two weeks.

Love to all the family and tell them I will pop in on them very soon.

Good Bye

Your Sister Acca