

Fort Davis

National Historic Site

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Curriculum Materials Grades 6-8

Student Activities: A Teenager's Letters from Fort Davis

A Teenager's Letters from Fort Davis



George Grierson was 13-years-old when he came to Fort Davis with his parents in 1882. He was the son of Colonel Benjamin Grierson and wife Alice. They moved to the fort when his father became the new post commander. In his new home, which was the commanding officer's quarters, George shared a bedroom with his 15-year-old brother, Harry. George also had two older brothers who lived at the fort. His oldest brother, Charley, was an army officer like his father. Robert, his next oldest brother, had a job at the fort working for the quartermaster department.

When Alice traveled to Illinois to visit family members and friends, she required George to write to her on a regular basis. Many of George's letters still exist today. They tell what he did when his mother was away and give us a glimpse into the lives of teenagers at frontier forts like Fort Davis. George especially

liked to go hunting, and in one of the letters he makes reference to a "long tom"—a long-barreled shot gun that he was going to get to use.

Below are two of George's letters. Notice that there are some spelling and grammar mistakes. George attended the post school at Fort Davis, but before that he had been home-schooled by a governess.

*Fort Davis texas.
October 30th 1883*

Dear Mama, Harry went hunting Friday evening and we expect him back some time to day. Robert and I went hunting down past the ranch about seven miles, and we killed twentytwo ducks. Robert killed fifteen of them and I killed seven. tell Charley not to forget the ball, and I hope you will bring the boots with you when you come back. Harry got back Just before dinner, and they got four Antelopes and one deer, and a few ducks. Harry killed three of them. I went to the shoot in the afternoon, and Robert let me shoot five shots and I broke four out of five. Harry gave me a guitar and I am trying to learn. this is not a very long letter. I cant think of any thing to rite. love to all.

George T. Grierson

Fort Davis Texas,
Nov 8th 1884.

Dear Mamma

*I did not know what to do with my self to-day so I thought I would write to you. I think you better come back home for I am geting so lonsome that I dont know what to do. Yesterday-evening I went over to the school-house with Henry Smither and looked at pictures for a long time. Then I came home and went in the dining-room to the fire and wormed my self, and then I got some lunch, and then I went to bed for it was after taps.-----Lieut Davis expects to go hunting in a bout two weeks, and he said I might go with him. Tell Harry that Lieut-Davis is going to let me have a new long tom to hunt with, for I want to kill five more antelope before Harry comes back so that it will make 10 antelope. Tell Harry that I hope he will come back when you come. Every thing seems to be upsidedown ever since you have bin gon and it is still worse since Papa has gon.----
---Robtert was not hear to correct the words so I did the best I could. love to all.*

*Your Son
Geo. T. Grierson*

Questions:

1. From these two letters, what are some observations you can make about the life that children had at a frontier fort?
2. Write a letter of at least three paragraphs to someone in your family whom you have not seen in a while. Consider what you will tell about the things you have been doing. What about school activities and school work? Friends? After school activities? Family news? Try to include as many details as possible.
3. Make spelling and grammar corrections to one of the letters.
4. EXTRA CREDIT: Compare the bedroom of the Grierson boys to what a teenage boy's bedroom looks like today.

Photos of restored Grierson boys' bedroom in the Commanding Officer's house.



Ms. A. 9. 2. 18.

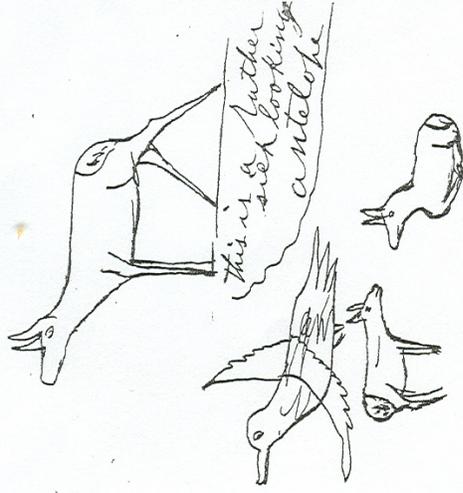
Fort Davis Texas,
Nov 8th 1886

Dear Mamma

I did not know what to do with my self to-day so I thought I would write to you, I think you better come back home for I am getting so lonesome that I dont know what to do yesterday-evening I went over to the school house with Herry Smith and looked at pictures for a long time, then I came home and went in the dining-room to the fire and warmed my self and then I got some lunch, and then I went to bed for it was after taps.

Leub Davis expects to go hunting in a bout two weeks and he said I might go with him, Tell Hary that Leub-Davis is going to let me have a skew long tom to hunt with, for I want to kill five more antelope before Hary comes back so that it will make 10 antelope. Tell Hary that I hope he will come back when you come, Every thing seems to be up side down ever since you have bin gon and it is still worse since Papa has gon.

Robert was not hear to correct the words so I did the best I could. Love to all, your son
Geo. M. Grierson



Letter from George Grierson to his mother.

Nov. 8, 1886