

1st Louisiana Regular

RECEIVED
MAY 14 2004
Vicksburg N.M.P
Vicksburg, MS

May 12, 2004

Mr. Terry Winschel
Vicksburg National Military Park
3201 Clay Street
Vicksburg, MS 39180-3495

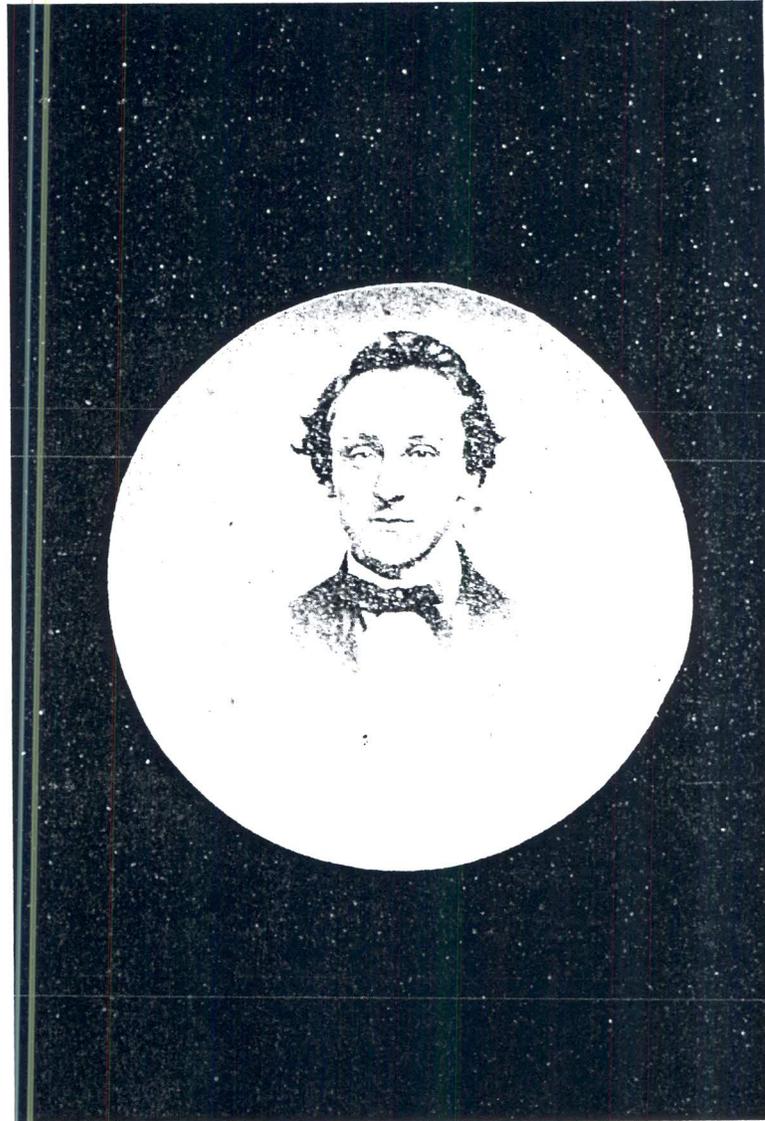
Dear Terry,

Following up our recent telephone conversation, I'm enclosing the information on the account of Lt. Julian Bringier's death at the Battle of Stones River (Murphreesboro) on December 31, 1862. The story of his sword and its journey back to Louisiana is quite interesting. Its current whereabouts is unknown, but I suspect it is in Virginia, with that branch of the Trist family. As far as I know, the packet of original documents relating this story is still in Illinois awaiting a buyer.

I would appreciate it if you could send a copy of the account to the Stones River National Military Park. Who knows, maybe one day the original documents can be acquired and the location of the sword (if it is still in existence) ascertained. Let me know your thoughts.

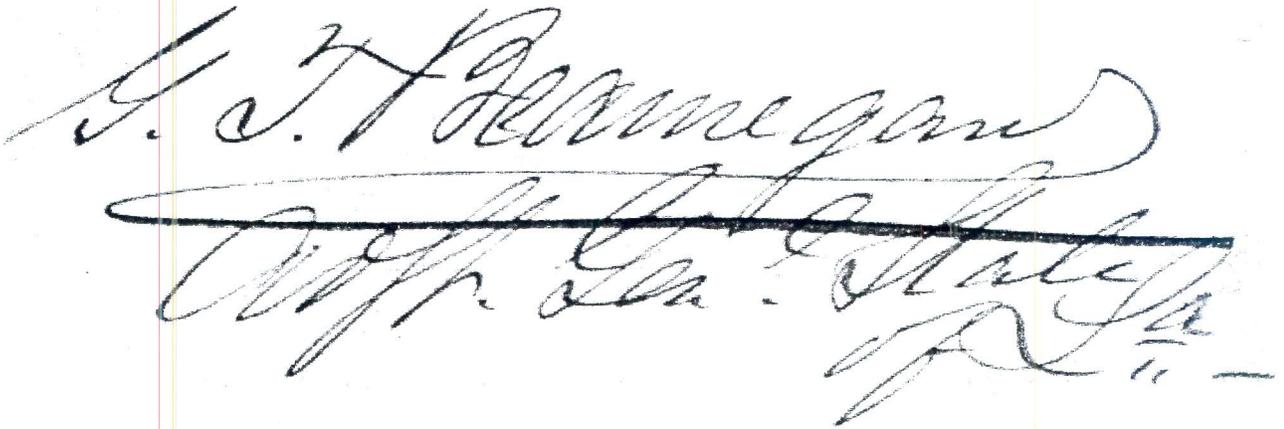
Sincerely,

Duke



Julian Bringier Trist (1836-1862)

An enlargement of Beauregard's signature on one of the letters:



Overview of the story and documents

In addition to a letter signed by General P.G.T. Beauregard, there is a set of letters and documents in this lot that tell a story about two soldiers--one in the Union Army and one in the Confederate Army. The letter is part of the story. In order for you to understand what all of the documents mean, it will help to give you an overview, and then go through each document one by one.

The story

In 1862, at the battle of Stone^s River (Murphreesboro), a Union soldier (George Kent) came upon a wounded Confederate officer (Julian Bonigrin^{BRINGIER} Trist) who was dying of his wounds. (I am not sure of the spelling of Bonigrin--it could be Bonigrir). Kent gave the Confederate officer water and tended to him. The Confederate officer, in gratitude, gave him his sword. Kent sent a very interesting letter home shortly after this where he told about the battle and mentions this event and gives instructions for care of the sword. The letter is part of the lot. The letter is also interesting for its own sake--giving detail about the battle of Murphreesboro and, especially, giving us some insight into the character of George Kent. He talks with a heavy heart about the dying and how he wishes the war to be over. But, he still takes time to be a very loving and romantic husband--telling his wife about some holly leaves he is sending home to her and telling her not to worry because he is comfortable.

One gets an idea from this letter that were we to know this George Kent, we would like him very much--someone who is a good soldier, who is concerned about his friends, who is loving and reassuring to his wife (even sending her a little gift), and, in terms of the main part of this story, someone who would help and give comfort to a Confederate Officer who had, just moments earlier, been his enemy trying to kill him. What is written in this letter helps us to understand the next events in this story which occur 20 years later.

Twenty years later, Kent sent out word through various veterans organizations that he wanted to find the relatives of the Confederate Officer and return the sword to them. There is a short newspaper clipping included in the lot giving minutes of the meeting of the Benevolent Association of the Army of Northern Virginia indicating they had received word of Kent's offer. The minutes reflect that they will send the letter to the Army of Tennessee. Note that they have Trist's name listed in this article as T.B. Frish at one point and Fish at another. Obviously, copy-editing was not very good at this time. It is also possible that Kent may not have either completely remembered Trist's name or it had gotten confused in several communications along the way. Kent is at this time living in Gridley, Illinois.

The next letter is dated September 20, 1883, in which the brother of Lieutenant Trist, whose name is N.B. Trist, writes to Kent and indicates that he has heard from the Association of the Army of Tennessee that Kent wishes to return the sword. Mr. N.B. Trist is now living in New Orleans.

The third letter, also from N.B. Trist to Kent, is dated December 14, 1883. In it, he apologizes for the delay in getting documentation to Mr. Kent that he is the brother of the Confederate officer, J.B. Trist.

The fourth letter, which is signed by Beauregard, is the documentation that N.B. Trist is, indeed, the brother of Lieutenant J.B. Trist. It is signed by Francis T. Nichols, the Ex-Governor of Louisiana, Douglas West, late Major 1st Louisiana Infantry, I.A. Chatarou, President of the Association of Army of Tennessee, and G.T. Beauregard, who is now Adjutant General for the State of Louisiana.

The fifth letter is from N.B. Trist where he thanks Kent for sending the sword.

Then, there are some newspaper clippings that describe the story and the return of the sword. One clipping is noted as coming from the Bloomington, Illinois Pantagraph, and the other is described as coming from the Chicago Tribune. Bloomington Illinois is close to Gridley Illinois. Note that the Bloomington Illinois Pantagraph also lists the Confederate officer's name as J.B. Frish. **NOTE ALSO THAT THIS ARTICLE MENTIONS THAT GENERAL BEAUREGARD AUTHENTICATED THE NAME OF THE OFFICER AND THAT N.B. TRIST IS THE OFFICER'S BROTHER.** The article that has Chicago Tribune penciled in above it has the names spelled correctly. It credits the story to the New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Finally, there is a picture of Kent in his later years. This appears to be a reproduction. He is pictured with his wife (who isn't given a name). I have spent a lot of time with these documents and this story, and I truly hope that the woman in this picture is the wife he wrote to 40 years earlier after the battle of Murphreesboro. It is nice for me to think that Kent, being the decent man he appeared to be, would have had a long and happy life with someone he loved so much.

I wonder if there is a family bible, somewhere, with some dried holly between the pages.

Condition of documents

All five letters are, in my opinion, in great condition. Few if any tears and most writing is legible. I am including an old translation of each letter, but am not guaranteeing the translation is correct word for word--I include the translations however because they are also old.

The 3 newspaper clippings were taken from a page in someone's scrapbook. They are attached (glued) to the page of the scrapbook. The picture of Kent is glued (in one small spot) to a piece of black paper. Ruins the value of it a little if it was original, but since I don't believe it is, I don't think that is of much consequence.

Where these documents came from

Mr. Kent's Grandson died several years ago leaving no heirs. His nephew, in going through boxes in his house, after relatives had removed his possessions, found these items at the bottom of one of the boxes that was probably going to be trashed. He recognized them for their value, and has had them in his possession since that time. They are being sold, on consignment, from the nephew who rescued these items.

First letter: Kent writes home to his family and describes helping Lieutenant Trist and receiving the sword:

Dear Mother & Family
 I received your kind & very kind letter
 and was glad to hear from you
 and all the family. I am well
 and hope these few lines will
 find you all the same. I have
 not much news to write at
 present. I am still in the
 hospital and am getting
 better every day. I have
 not yet been able to go
 out much. The weather is
 very pleasant now. I
 hope you are all well.
 I must close for this time.
 Write soon.
 Your affectionate son,
 Kent

I was very glad to hear from you
 and all the family. I am well
 and hope these few lines will
 find you all the same. I have
 not much news to write at
 present. I am still in the
 hospital and am getting
 better every day. I have
 not yet been able to go
 out much. The weather is
 very pleasant now. I
 hope you are all well.
 I must close for this time.
 Write soon.
 Your affectionate son,
 Kent

The sword
 was
 given
 to
 me
 by
 Trist

that could walk were taken
down because as usual
the soldiers had to be exchanged
those who could not walk were
killed on the spot, the 24th
Wisconsin who were subjected
to when the battle commenced
soon over me fell back to a
fence, then 42nd Ill 9, 15th
Missouri charged as another
brigade that had down the
24th Ill. back, because there
was a mistake (the 21st Michigan and
I mistook their Col's order for
our own and went with them
and drove the 24th back 1/2 a
mile and on my way back to
find my own Regt. I saw
a rebel officer try to reach
out his hand to me and ask
for water. I gave him some
raised ^{in hand} on a blanket and I gave
him as comfortable as I could

to give me his sword. I
permitted him I would.
I have not to give you a
copy. take care of it or
let it go out of your hand
on any account whatever
never come back let it be
to one of the boys to be
and given to these children
The rest of the Brigade
are well but some are
~~some~~ 140 men killed was
and remaining are to be
killed 2 wounded & 2 more
all the General's in one he
were killed. Co B killed
about General. The boys on
sides was very some. both
last year. healthy they have
and you are happy to be
happy we expect to remain
happy here and have down to
that know what we will

(John & Francis Nauese & Willey Taylor are safe, although they were in the hottest of the fight)

Murphreesboro Jan. 7 1863

My dear wife:

I am again spared to write to you again. I wrote a few lines on the back of a letter Theodore wrote me from the hospital. I have seen him since he is very comfortable and in very good spirits. His wound is not serious but it was a narrow escape. He was at my side when he was hit and the bullets flying very thick. He stood fire very well indeed although he was a boy and it was his first battle. I suppose he is in Nashville now. He says he is well taken care of. Wm. Blunk is with him. His hand is very sore but will not lame him much. The rebels Dr. treated him very well. All that could walk were taken to Murphreesboro and sent to Vicksburg and to be exchanged. Those who could not walk were (paroled?) on the spot. The 24th Wisconsin who were supporting us when the battle commenced, run and we fell back to a fence. Then 42nd Ill. & 21st Michigan run) mistook their Col's. orders for our own and went with them and drove the rebels back $\frac{1}{2}$ mile and on my way back to find my own Regiment I saw a rebel officer dying. He reached out his hand to me and asked for water. I gave him some, raised his head on a blanket and made him as comfortable as I could. He gave me his sword, which I promised him I would keep. I have sent it to you by Express. Take care of it Never let it go out of your possession on any account whatever. If I never come back let it be given to one of the boys to be kept and given to their children. The rest of the Gridley boys are well and safe. We lost 140 men killed wounded and missing. Our Co. lost 2 killed 2 wounded & 2 missing. All the Generals in our brigade were killed. Co. B killed one rebel General. The loss on both sides was very severe. Both sides lost very heavily. They have left and gone. We suppose

don't know what we will do. I send you some leaves of the holly tree. It is a very handsome tree indeed. It remains green all winter. The heat in my pocket has turned them a little yellow. Those small leaves are off of the mistletoe. It grows in bunches on walnut, elm and some other trees. That remains green also all winter. It is very much in England at Christmas festivals. It looks beautiful on the trees after their leaves have fallen off. The weather is very pleasant. No frost in the ground yet. we can sleep out of doors very comfortable. It rains here instead of snow as with us. It is a beautiful climate but the country looks very desolate from the effects of this terrible war. I hope it will soon be ended in some way so this killing of men may be stopped.

Y^{ours} ever

Geo. W. Kent

?
Sent to Nashville as usual

Murfreesboro Jan. 7 /63

My dear wife,

I am again spared to write to you again. I write a few lines on the back of a letter Theodore wrote me from the hospital. I have seen him since. He is very comfortable and in very good spirits. His wound is not serious but it was a narrow escape. He was at my side when he was hit and the bullets flying very thick. He stood fire very well indeed although he was a boy and it was his first battle. I suppose he is in Nashville now. He says he is well taken care of. Wm. Blunk is with him. His hand is very sore but will not lame him much. The rebels Dr. treated him very well. All that could walk were taken to Murfreesboro and sent to Vicksburg and to be exchanged. Those who could not walk were paroled on the spot. The 24th Wisconsin who were supporting us when the battle commenced run and we fell back to a fence. Then 42nd Illinois and 15th Missouri charged on another brigade that had driven the 36th Illinois back, because their support (the 21st Michigan run). I mistook their Cols. Order for our own and went with them and drove the rebels back ½ mile and on my way back to find my own Regiment I saw a rebel officer dying. He reached out his hand to me and asked for water. I gave him some, raised his head on a blanket and made him as comfortable as I could. He gave me his sword, which I promised him I would keep. Take care of it. Never let it go out of your possession on any account whatever. If I never come back let it be given to one of the boys to be kept and given to their children. The rest of the Gridley boys are well and safe. We lost 140 men killed wounded and missing. Our company lost 2 killed 2 wounded and 2 missing. All the Generals in our brigade were killed. Co. B killed one rebel General. The loss on both sides was very severe. They have left and gone, we suppose to Chattanooga. We expect to remain in camp here a few days then I don't know what we shall do. I send you some leaves of the Holly tree. It is a very handsome tree indeed it remains green all winter. The heat in my pocket has turned them a little yellow. Those small leaves are off of the Mistletoe. It grows in bunches on walnut, elm, and some other trees that remains green also all winter. It is very much in England at Christmas festivals. It looks beautiful on the trees after their leaves have fallen off. The weather is very pleasant no frost in the ground yet. We can sleep out of doors very comfortable. It rains here instead of snow as with us. It is a beautiful climate but the country looks very desolate from the effects of this terrible war. I hope it will soon be ended in some way so that killing of men may be stopped.

Yours Ever,

Geo. W. Kent

Sent to Nashville as usual.

John & Francis Nauese & Willey Taylor are safe, although they were in the hottest of the fight.

Newspaper clipping regarding Benevolent Association of the Army of Northern Virginia receiving word that Kent wishes to locate relatives of Lieutenant Trist (size is enlarged so you can read the print better)

THE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA.

The Benevolent Association of the Army of Northern Virginia met last night, Col. Louis Prados in the chair, and a large representation present.

The treasurer's report showed a very favorable condition of affairs.

Several names were recommended for membership and several applications were read.

The finance committee reported progress.

The following were elected members of the association: Thomas Higgins, of Company B, Second Louisiana Regiment; P. Schlessinger, Company K, Fourteenth Louisiana Regiment; Henry Ory, Company A, Wheat's Battalion, afterward Louisiana Guard Battery; J. G. Campbell, entered sergeant Company E, Sixth Louisiana Regiment, afterward promoted to brigade commander; T. A. Faries, second lieutenant junior, Company E, First Battalion Louisiana Infantry, afterward commander in succession of several battalions of artillery.

A communication was read from George W. Kent, late first lieutenant Company B, 88th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, stating that he now had in his possession a sword which had been given him by Lieut. T. B. Fish, killed at the battle of Stone River. The evident object of the letter was to offer the sword to any of the relatives of Lieut. Fish who may desire it. Lieut. Kent's address is Gridley, Ill. It was ordered that this communication be turned over to the Army of Tennessee.

The meeting then adjourned.

Letter from N.B. Trist to Kent saying he has heard
he has his brother's sword:

New Orleans Sept 24/83

Dear Mr Kent Esq

Dear Sir
The president
of "Association of the Army of
Tennessee" has sent me a letter
from you in which you state
that you have the sword of my
brother - Lieut. J. B. Trist who
was killed at the battle of
Stone River or Murfreesboro
as we call it.

Presuming that your
letter is but a first step to-
wards the return of the
sword, I take the liberty of
placing myself in communi-
cation with you.

With my heartfelt thanks

for the good services you have
done me, dying brother.

I remain,

Yours truly,

A. B. Frost

No. 6 Canadaleet St.

St. Orleans.

New Orleans Sept 20 '63

Geo. W. Kent Esq.

Dear Sir

The President of
"Association of the Army of Tennessee" has sent me
a letter from you in which you state that you have
the sword of my brother, Leut. J. B. Trist who was
killed at the battle of Stones River or Murfreesboro
as we call it.

Presuming that your letter is but a first step
towards the return of the sword, I take the liberty
of placing myself in communication with you.
With my heartfelt thanks for the good services you
rendered my dying brother,

I remain

Yours truly

H. B. Trist

No. 6 Carondelet St.

N. Orleans

Letter from N.B. Trist to Kent where he apologizes for his delay in getting back to Kent and where he provides the documentation letter:

New Orleans, Dec. 14 1863.

Gen. W. Hunt Esq.

Dear Sir.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the certificate of authentication, which has been the cause of the delay in forwarding same to you. The certificate, which I enclose, will I hope prove satisfactory, as I have procured exceptional attestation to it. Among other prominent names, you will perceive that of ~~Gen. W. R. Anderson~~ of Confederate Forces, and Adjutant Genl. of La.

I assure you that I fully appreciate the generous feeling which has prompted you to return my brother's sword to his relative, and that I will hold in grateful remembrance your kind offer to have it in his hour of need.

Yours very truly

A. C. Smith
Genl.