



**ULYSSES  
S. GRANT**

**LETTERS  
OF ULYSSES  
S. GRANT TO HIS  
FATHER AND HIS  
YOUNGEST  
SISTER, 1857-78**

**Ulysses S. Grant**

# **Letters of Ulysses S. Grant to His Father and His Youngest Sister, 1857-78**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Titlepage](#)

[Text](#)

# 1912

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## PREFACE

[Table of Contents](#)

There has of late years been a tendency, as a result of the teachings of certain historical authorities, to minimize the influence of the leadership of the so-called Great Men, and to question the importance of their work as a factor in shaping the history of the time. Great events are referred to as brought about by such general influences as "the spirit of the time" (Goethe's *Zeitgeist*), the "movement of humanity," or "forces of society." If we accepted the theories of the writers of this school, we should be forced to the conclusion that generations of men move across the world's stage impelled by forces entirely outside of themselves; and that as far as the opportunity of individual action is concerned, that is for action initiated and completed under his own will-power, man might almost as well be a squirrel working in a revolving cage. The squirrel imagines that he moves the cylinder, but the outsider knows that the movement is predetermined, and that there is no change of position and no net result from the exertion.

A large number of people hold, notwithstanding, to the old-time feeling expressed, and doubtless exaggerated and over-emphasized, in such books as Carlyle's *Hero Worship*. They are unwilling, and in fact they find it practically impossible, to get away from the belief that the thought of the time is directed by the great thinkers, and that the

action of the community is influenced and largely shaped by the power, whether this be utilized for good or for evil, of the great men of action.

In any case, men will continue to be interested in the personalities of the leaders whose names are connected with the great events of history. The citizens of each nation look back with legitimate pride upon the patriotic work of those who have helped to found the state, or to maintain its existence.

Among the national leaders whose names will always hold an honorable place in American history is Ulysses S. Grant, the simple-hearted man and capable soldier, to whose patriotism, courage, persistence, and skill was so largely due the successful termination of the war between the States, the contest which assured the foundations of the Republic. We are interested not only in learning what this man did, but in coming to know, as far as may be practicable, what manner of man he was. It is all-important in a study of development of character to have placed within reach the utterances of the man himself. There is no utterance that can give as faithful a picture of a man's method of thought and principle of action as the personal letter written, with no thought of later publication, to those who are near to him.

The publishers deem themselves fortunate, therefore, in being able to place before the fellow-citizens of General Grant who are appreciative of the great service rendered by him to the country, and who are interested also in the personality of the man, a series of letters written to members of his family or to near friends. These letters,

dating back to the time of his youth, give a clear and trustworthy impression of the nature of the man and of the development of character and of force that made possible his all-valuable leadership.

The plan for the publication of these letters had received the cordial approval of General Grant's son, the late General Frederick D. Grant, and it is only because of his sudden death, which has brought sorrow upon a great circle of friends and upon the community at large, that the publishers are prevented from including with the volume a letter from the General as the head of the Grant family, giving formal expression to his personal interest in the undertaking.

This collection of letters will constitute a suitable companion volume to Grant's *Personal Memoirs* and to the accepted biographies of the Great Commander whose memory is honored by his fellow-citizens not only for the patience, persistence, and skill of the leader of armies, as evidenced in the brilliant campaigns that culminated with Vicksburg, Missionary Ridge, and Appomattox, but for the sturdy integrity of character, modest bearing, and sweetness of nature of the great citizen.

GEO. HAVEN PUTNAM.

NEW YORK, April 25, 1912.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

ULYSSES SIMPSON GRANT

From a photograph by W. Kurtz,

Frontispiece

New York.

JESSE ROOT GRANT, ÆTAT. 69  
Father of Ulysses Simpson  
Grant.  
From a photograph.

MRS. HANNAH GRANT  
Mother of Ulysses Simpson  
Grant.  
From a photograph by Landy,  
taken in Cincinnati.

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER  
WRITTEN BY ULYSSES SIMPSON  
GRANT TO HIS FATHER

FACSIMILE OF GENERAL  
GRANT'S PROCLAMATION TO  
THE CITIZENS OF PADUCAH

GENERAL ULYSSES SIMPSON  
GRANT  
From a photograph taken in  
1865 by Gutekunst,  
Philadelphia.

ULYSSES SIMPSON GRANT  
From a photograph taken during  
his second term as President.

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## **Letters of Ulysses S. Grant**

[In 1843, at the age of twenty-one, Ulysses S. Grant was graduated from West Point with the rank of brevet second

lieutenant. He was appointed to the 4th Infantry, stationed at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis. In May, 1844, he was ordered to the frontier of Louisiana with the army of observation, while the annexation of Texas was pending. The bill for the annexation of Texas was passed March 1, 1845; the war with Mexico began in April, 1846. Grant was promoted to a first-lieutenancy September, 1847. The Mexican War closed in 1848. Both this war and the Civil War he characterizes in his *Memoirs* as "unholy."

Soon after his return from Mexico he was married to Julia Dent. The next six years were spent in military duty in Sacketts Harbor, New York, Detroit, Michigan, and on the Pacific coast. He was promoted to the captaincy of a company in 1853; but because of the inadequacy of a captain's pay, he resigned from the army, July, 1854, and rejoined his wife and children at St. Louis. In speaking of this period Grant says, "I was now to commence at the age of thirty-two a new struggle for our support."

The first chapter in this new struggle was farming. The following letter was written to his youngest sister Mary, then sixteen years old, afterward Mrs. M.J. Cramer. ["Jennie," afterward Mrs. A.R. Corbin, was the second sister, Virginia.]

St. Louis, Mo.,  
August 22nd, 1857.

DEAR SISTER:

Your letter was received on last Tuesday, the only day in the week on which we get mail, and this is the earliest opportunity I have had of posting a letter.

I am glad to hear that mother and Jennie intend making us a visit. I would advise them to come by the river if they



prefer it. Write to me beforehand about the time you will start, and from Louisville again, what boat you will be on, direct to St. Louis,—not Sappington, P.O.—and I will meet you at the river or Planter's House, or wherever you direct.

We are all very well. Julia contemplates visiting St. Charles next Saturday to spend a few days. She has never been ten miles from home, except to come to the city, since her visit to Covington.

I have nothing in particular to write about. My hard work is now over for the season with a fair prospect of being remunerated in everything but the wheat. My wheat, which would have produced from four to five hundred bushels with a good winter, has yielded only seventy-five. My oats were good, and the corn, if not injured by frost this fall, will be the best I ever raised. My potato crop bids fair to yield fifteen hundred bushels or more. Sweet potatoes, melons and cabbages are the only other articles I am raising for market. In fact, the oats and corn I shall not sell.

I see I have written a part of this letter as if I intended to direct to one, and part as if to the other of you; but you will understand it, so it makes no difference.

Write to me soon and often. Julia wears black. I had forgotten to answer that part of your letter.

Your affectionate Brother,  
ULYSS.

P.S. Tell father that I have this moment seen Mr. Ford, just from Sacketts Harbor, who informs me that while there he enquired of Mr. Bagley about my business with Camp, and learns from him that the account should be acted upon immediately. Camp is now at Governor's Island, N.Y., and

intends sailing soon for Oregon. If he is stopped he may be induced to disgorge. Tell father to forward the account immediately.

U.

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[White Haven was the name of the Dent homestead near St. Louis. Grant has rented out his own farm, and taken that of his father-in-law.

Written to his sister Mary.]

White Haven,

March 21st, 1858.

DEAR SISTER:

Your letter was received one week ago last Tuesday, and I would have answered it by the next mail but it so happened that there was not a sheet of paper about the house, and as Spring has now set in, I do not leave the farm except in cases of urgent necessity. Father's letter, enclosing Mr. Bagley's relative to the Camp business, was received one or two weeks earlier, and promptly answered. My reply was long, giving a detailed account of my whole transactions with Camp, and a copy of which Father can have to peruse when he comes along this way next.

Julia and her children are all well and talk of making you a visit next fall,—but I hardly think they will go. But if any of you, except Father, should visit us this spring, or early summer, Julia says that Fred. may go home with you to spend a few months. She says she would be afraid to let him travel with Father alone; she has an idea that he is so absent-minded that if he were to arrive in Cincinnati at night he would be just as apt as not to walk out of the cars and be

gone for an hour before he would recollect that he had a child with him. I have no such fears however. Fred does not read yet, but he will, I think, in a few weeks. We have no school within a mile and a half, and that is too far to send him in the winter season. I shall commence sending him soon however. In the meantime I have no doubt but that he is learning faster at home. Little Ellen is growing very fast, and talks now quite plainly. Jesse R. is growing very rapidly, is very healthy and, they say, is the best looking child among the four. I don't think however there is much difference between them in that respect.

Emma Dent is talking of visiting her relatives in Ohio and Penn<sup>a</sup> this Summer, and if she does, she will stop a time with you. Any talk of any of us visiting you, must not stop you from coming to see us. The whole family here are fond of planning visits, but poor in the execution of their plans. It may take two seasons yet before any of these visits are made; in the meantime, we are anxious to see all of you. For my part I do not know when I shall ever be able to leave home long enough for a visit. I may possibly be able to go on a flying visit next fall. I am anxious to make one more visit home before I get old.

This Spring has opened finely for farming and I hope to do well; but I shall wait until the crops are gathered before I make any predictions. I have now three negro men, two hired by the year and one of Mr. Dent's, which, with my own help, I think, will enable me to do my farming pretty well with assistance in harvest. I have however a large farm. I shall have about twenty acres of potatoes, twenty of corn, twenty-five of oats, fifty of wheat, twenty-five of meadow,

some clover, Hungarian grass and other smaller products, all of which require labor before they are got into market, and the money realized upon them. You are aware, I believe, that I have rented out my place and have taken Mr. Dent's. There are about two hundred acres of ploughed land on it and I shall have, in a few weeks, about two hundred and fifty acres of woods pasture fenced up besides. Only one side of it and a part of another has to be fenced to take the whole of it in, and the rails are all ready. I must close with the wish that some of you would visit us as early as possible. In your letter you ask when my note in bank becomes due. The seventeenth of Apl. is the last day of grace when it must be paid.

Give Julia's, the children's, and my love to all at home and write soon.

Your Brother  
ULYSSES.

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[When a boy Grant suffered severely from fever and ague. This attack now lasted a year and was probably a factor in determining him to give up farming.

To his sister Mary.]

St. Louis, Mo.,  
Sept. 7th, 1858.

DEAR SISTER:

Your letter was received in due time and I should have answered it immediately, but that I had mailed a letter from Julia to Jennie the morning of the receipt of yours. I thought then to wait for two or three weeks; by that time there was so much sickness in my family, and Freddy so dangerously