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The Morgan Letters ~ their Journey to The Texas Collection

- Consists of 26 letters sent by Dr. Nathaniel Alexander Morgan to his wife Eugenia Margaret Frances “Fanny” McCown Morgan;
- At a November 2007 family reunion, surviving children and grandchildren of Maggie Scott Logue decided the letters should be available to all;
- Letters were given by five female first cousins in 2010;
- Why were they given? To tell the beautiful story about their great grandparents;
- Keep the letters together, preserve their legacy of love, if each cousin took their “share” then the story would be lost;
- Cousins wanted others to read their letters and see the commitment of their great grandparents;



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Who Where Alex and Fanny?

Nathaniel (Alex) Alexander Morgan

- Born August 24, 1823 in Mecklenberg County, North Carolina;
- When he was ten, he moved with his family to Green County Alabama (Eutaw)
- Attended and graduated from medical school from the Jefferson Medical Institute in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1847;
- In 1849, moved to Marshal, Texas to practice medicine;
- Met and married Eugenia Frances “Fanny” McCowen;
- Moved to Mansfield, Louisiana by 1860 (1860 Population Census);
- Listed as a physician/farmer;
- In 1862, enlisted in Company F, 19th Louisiana Infantry (appointed assistant surgeon after the Battle of Shiloh);
- Moved to McLennan County, Texas by 1870;
- Died in Fort Worth Texas, March 14, 1907;
- Buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Fort Worth, TX (Grave not marked)



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Eugenia Margaret Frances “Fanny” McCowen

- Born November 10, 1834, in Greene County, Alabama;
- Her father, James McCowen, served in the First Legislature of the State of Texas. Her father died in 1852 and her mother later remarried William Thomas Fortson in 1855 and moved with him to DeSoto Parrish LA. ;
- Married Alex when she was nearly 16 and he was 26 on October 23, 1850 in Marshall, Texas;
- Fanny and Alex followed them to DeSoto Parrish and that is where they were when the Civil War began;
- Gave birth to eight children: Jim, Ross, Mary Elizabeth “Pet,” were born in Louisiana and three were born in Texas;
- Fanny remained there with the three surviving children throughout the war (they had lost one child prior to moving to LA and lost another while he was at war);
- Fanny’s letters to Alex were destroyed upon receipt “for fear they should fall into hands of outsiders;
- Died in McLennan County, Texas December 10, 1917, buried in Patrick Cemetery, just outside Waco;



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What Was I Thinking?

I thought these letters were important to The Texas Collection, community, and to these donors; I wanted:

- To thank and honor the donors, as well as Alex and Fanny;
- This small collection to be different, so many great collections come in to an archives and wait to be discovered; like a child to be adopted, I wanted this collection to speak;
- Visibility and attention
 - Letters to come alive;
 - Alex to have a voice after all these years and be remembered; and
 - More than an online exhibit, I wanted it to seem as if Alex was sending these letters to his beloved wife Fanny, and that the reader was Fanny, it was almost like a play and the reader becomes the character

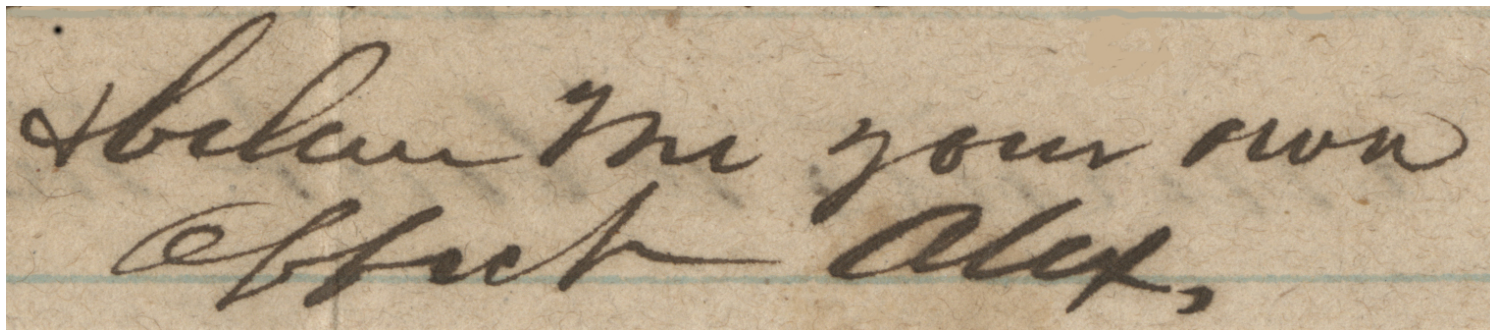


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Where did the title come from?





What type of a story is this? It is about love, faith, family, caring, and war.

“I was made extremely rich a few days ago at a very small cost. After I had made up my mind to wait till the war was over before I heard from you again, I received three letters by one mail, two from you + one from Capt Jack Fortson. His did not contain much of any thing, wise or otherwise, but yours, the one of the 16 Jany. particularly. Such a long, well written, pleasant, cheerful letter. you have no idea how much good it did me.”

*-Alex Morgan, Hd.Qrs. 1st Confederate Regt. Ga. Vol
Mobile, Ala. Feby 16. 1863.*



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What was Alice thinking?

“I have to confess, when John Wilson first came up with the idea for a **serial release** of the Morgan letters, I just didn’t get it. I knew that stories were frequently published that way, and TV shows had episodes, but I was thinking of this as something more like a museum display online. Then one day, I sat down and read all 26 letters one right after another. It took me most of a day and I didn’t even break for lunch. I would periodically emerge wild-eyed from my office and confront a co-worker who had written his dissertation on the Civil War,” “Stonewall Jackson has died!” or “Oh my gosh, Chickamauga is coming, but they don’t know it!”



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Alice's thoughts and ideas:

- Develop drama;
- Bring Alex and Fanny to life for other people;
- How could we keep the audience coming back?
- Create an experience for the audience;
- Wanted the audience to enter into Alex and Fanny's lives imaginatively, not just intellectually;
- Wanted to do virtual living history, to make these people come alive online;
- Alice thought of herself as part of the target audience;





- Took note of every time Alice had to ask Paul Fisher for help or clarification;
- Tried to figure out what information was most useful for her to understand;
- This became the foundation for our approach;
- Tried to find every song, every book Alex mentioned;
- Get a true sense of the “tangible objects;”
- Did not limit ourselves to our collection went out to anywhere there was useful information and then linked out to other institutions and other collections to harness the power of the internet;





The Alex Morgan letters are not about battles or digging trenches. These letters are about his thoughts—as he puts it,

“...I will give you not an account of the battle, that you will see in the paper, but what will interest you more my own impressions of things, as they passed before me.”

... And that was what we set out to explore.



The Structure of the Exhibit

What was the proper medium for the exhibit?

- CONTENTdm;
- Webpage;
- Flickr;
- Blog;
- Tumblr;

Final selection was a blog utilizing WordPress

- Open source;
- No expense;
- Flexible;
- Responsive;
- Content management system;
- Supported by BU IT group



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Layout and concept:

- Beginning January 9, 2012 send three letters per week as if Alex is writing to his beloved Fanny (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday);
- Digitize each letter and provide both on the page;
- Transcribe and have multiple checks of every letter;
- Provide the “richness” in the letters; definitions, explanations, maps, photographs, etchings, references to places, people, and events ;
- Provide a visual or audio clip (music and voice of Alex) for the reader (a connector);
- Introduction was a 36 second audio-visual clip;
- Invitation to participate – compelling and intriguing (emotional);
- Confederate postage stamp, an icon and a visual reinforcement;
- Visual and interactive online exhibit;
- Unique feature was to push out into the greater scholarly community to find additional resource information for the reader to enjoy and learn from;
- (Provide clips of letters being read and of “I Love to Steal Away” and the “Bonnie Blue Flag”);



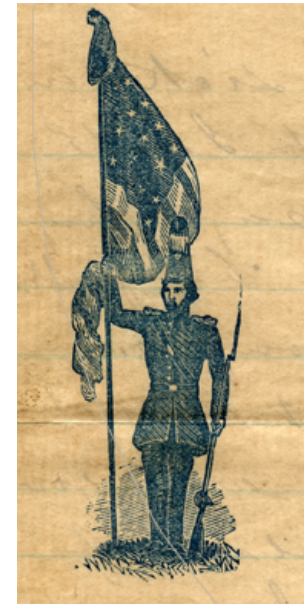
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LETTERS FROM THE BATTLEFIELD
TO FANNY FROM ALEX (1862-1864)

Camp Cumming Mobile, Ala. Feb 11/63
My dear wife
No letter from you yet, not one word from home. What can be the matter & I am getting very uneasy. I am afraid something very serious has happened. Perhaps you are very sick or maybe I was going to say dead. But I hope in God that may not be so. I try to believe it is the conclusion of the P.M. Surely you or Mary would have written if any thing very bad had happened. This suspicion is terrible. I do hope you get one of my letters occasionally. I have no news of importance. I saw from the paper that the blockade is raised at Charleston. Our fleet attacked the Gault's there a day or two ago & sunk one of their vessels & took another & crippled another very badly & chased the rest off. Our authorities declare the port open. You will doubtless see all the particulars in the news papers before you get this letter. My hopes of an early peace strengthen every day. I have no idea how the war will last longer than the middle of March. I fully expect to be at home in time to plant cotton. Make your own arrangements about the corn. I hope I will be there



Alex,



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Camp Corinth, April 9, 1862

“Every thing is in confusion for today + I cant collect my mind enough to write you any of the particulars of the fight. When I am at leisure more I will give you not an account of the battle, that you will see in the paper, but what will interest you more my own impressions of things, as they passed before me.”

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LETTERS FROM THE BATTLEFIELD
TO FANNY FROM ALEX (1862-1864)

Mansfield La.
May 17th 1864

From Jim &
Fanny

Mansfield La. May 17th 1864
Dear Cousin,
We received your letter a few days ago and was very glad to hear from you all - but was sorry to hear that Aunt Bet was sick. We are all well at present except Sister Eugenia she has been sick several days. There has been stirring times about here within the last two months. I suppose that you have heard of the battle of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill before this time, the battle was fought within 7 miles of our home, the guns could be heard distinctly. Uncle Joe and Cousin both escaped unhurt and a day or two after the battle both of them came home and stayed several days at our home. I was not at home and did not get to see them, we were ordered to Shreveport about two weeks before the battle. I did not stay in camp but a month was sick most of the time, there is no fun in soldiering. There is several hundred wounded men in Mansfield now and a great many wounded Yankees a great many have died from their wounds and are still dying every day, those of them are staying here but how will live in a day or two. Sister has not heard from Mr. Morgan since December she got two letters from Joe about week ago he was well and at Sandendale Springs Miss he said that he was coming home this summer. We have had several fish runs lately on the lake we catch the fish with the seine there will be an other fish run on the lake next Saturday I wish that you were here to go to it. I wrote you and Ed a long letter about two months ago but have not received an answer yet. Jim quit here, & as he is going off tomorrow on a consulting expedition want me to finish for him. Love Ed.
We are all well, & had a good swim yesterday.

which has excited the spirits of the officers our camp a pretty good, & was making some talk.
Old Ben's health is very bad, I don't think he will live long. I stayed in the city until last week, but days. Kate, Matt, & the other boys came away & arrived, neither of them are much. Margaret Calloway is dead, & old Mrs. Thomas the old daughter-in-law & Mrs. Garrison's youngest, are all dead. Some of the other family in the army. Brad, Holland, & George Adams, & Bill M. Hay were all killed here. There is more hope now of an easy peace than I have ever heard expected before. God grant it will come soon. I wish you had some news with you, there just within his a long letter. It talks so much about cousin Ellen & Pop about slavery. What did you all say of your sweet heart? I hope you have had letters back in that time that I have. I want you to show up & get some color back in your cheeks. Help & stick as much as possible & if he should not come there are no good jobs in the war, as we are caught in it.
What have you done with Mr. P. as I don't think I can see like that a fit for carrying you or much trouble. The correct way to get him is to get in love with some body else - but don't you marry a widow with children. Come home this summer & stay with me. Change thought better Smith was captured with some of your men, and that Mrs. Hay stay with dead yet, but has a long I wish she was in Kentucky you mentioning Aunt Bet soon, she will be a trouble as long as she lives by her. I wish she would make first & will old white face she could indulge her passion for swimming. I even wanted to go any place as bad as back to your home this summer, but it is so far & I have nothing but a buggy with out a top to go in. I wish you to send some of us all get sick here. The world love to you all. There this is the first you read it. Give my love to all & write soon - after to your affectionate cousin.
Eugenia.



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LETTERS FROM THE BATTLEFIELD
TO FANNY FROM ALEX (1862-1864)



THE SURGEON AT WORK AT THE REAR DURING AN ENGAGEMENT.—(See Page 59.)



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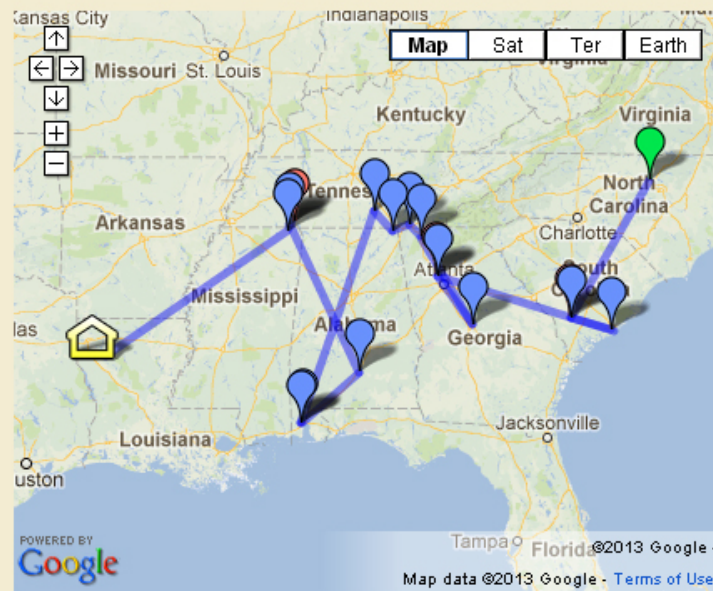


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Alex Morgan's Journey



Click on placemarks or travel lines for additional information.

Click here to see [Alex Morgan's Journey](#) in a larger map.



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LETTERS FROM THE BATTLEFIELD
TO FANNY FROM ALEX (1862-1864)

To
Albert G. Pike, Esq.
The Best Lawyer of Arkansas

THE
BONNIE BLUE FLAG

COMPOSED, ARRANGED
And sung
AT HIS

PERSONATION
BY
CONCERT'S

HARRY MACARTHY.
THE ARKANSAS COMEDIAN.

NEW ORLEANS
Published by A. E. BLACKMAR & BRO. 74. Camp St.





I Love to Steal Awhile Away

-Words by Phoebe H. Brown, tune: Woodstock (Dutton).

I love to steal awhile away
From every cumbering care,
And spend the hours of closing day
In humble, grateful, prayer.

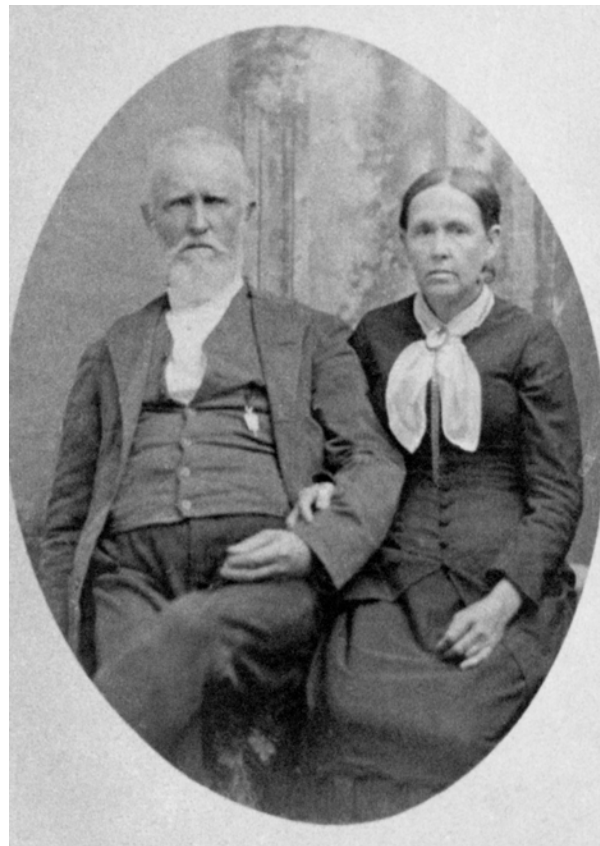
I love in solitude to shed
The penitential tear,
And all His promises to plead
Where none but God can hear.

I love to think on mercies past,
And future good implore,
And all my cares and sorrows cast
On God, whom I adore.





Alex and Fanny reached
2,371 visitors.



Dr. Alex & Fanny Morgan
c. late 1880s



What Did We Learn?

- Keep the beginning concept as simple as possible as the project will grow and take on a life of its own;
- Tap into the resources of the community you are involved with or build your own community;
- Make it fun and interesting, there are so many aspects to an exhibit like this, let it unfold organically;
- Keep the management of the project as simple as possible and trust the person you select as the leader;
- In the future, possibly involve a learning module for children;
- Provide additional reading lists; and
- Provide a way for people to add to the collection.



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