

**S0242 Kuck, Henry,
Letters, 1861-1865
5 Folders**

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Inventory by Steven Rowan, History Department, UM-St. Louis

Mrs. Marilyn Defani donated copies of the Kuck letters on March 5, 1986. This collection was copied from originals obtained by Mrs. Marilyn Defani from an estate sale in the Lemay area. Mrs. Dafani has graciously waived any copyright she might have over the items.

According to the internal evidence of the letters, which are entirely in German, Henry Kuck was a private soldier who enlisted for service in the 31st Regiment, Missouri Volunteer Infantry, in St. Louis, though his family lived somewhat outside Carondelet in a house owned by a Mr. John Eggers. He served in the siege of Vicksburg, where he saw serious action, and he was then moved into action in upper Alabama, Tennessee, and the highlands of Georgia. After service in the Battle of Atlanta, Kuck's unit remained in upper Alabama while Sherman's main army marched to Savannah. The regiment was disbanded in 1865 following the triumphant march of General Sherman's army through Washington, DC (which Walt Whitman saw and described in his diaries).

It is certain that Kuck was a member of the 31st Missouri Volunteers by Fall, 1862, but there is one letter from Fall, 1861 which indicates that he was serving -- however briefly -- in some other unit at that time.

Henry Kuck had modest artistic skills, which he occasionally used to decorate his letters, and he came to believe by 1864 that his letters constituted a virtual diary which it would be valuable to preserve. He seldom has more than a snail's-eye view of the movement of the war, whose waste and stupidity appalls him. His greatest eloquence in describing the war has to do with the manner in which sick and wounded were mistreated and exploited.

The most significant characteristic of these letters is the relationship of Henry Kuck with his young wife Metta and their growing band of children (at least three at one point). Henry Kuck writes frequently of his affection for his wife and children, and he is occupied in most of the letters with finding means to send most of his irregularly-arriving pay home, along with blankets and other scarce articles.

FOLDER LIST

FOLDER 1, 1861/2

4 October 1861(?) n.p: a friend has joined 1st Missouri Militia; we might be reorganized as an artillery company. 9 September 1862, Camp Fletcher, MO: we expect our bounty and a leave soon. 29 September 1862, Camp Blair, Ironton, Iron County, MO: ("Major General Halleck" stationery) money troubles. 16 October 1862, Ironton, MO: enclosed is a

photograph so my children may see what their father looked like if I die. 16 October 1862, Ironton, MO: ("Not a Star Must Fall" stationery) I sent the picture. 17 October 1862, Ironton, MO: (Not a Star Must Fall" stationery) I had a picture taken yesterday; we have new uniforms. 26 October 1862, Patterson, MO: we have gone 35 miles south of Ironton, we are to get new weapons before we go into action. 26 October 1862, Patterson, MO: ("Not a Star Must Fall, stationery") I am glad to hear you received the picture; we are a few miles beyond Camp Haines, will go another 60 miles further. 4 November 1862, Memphis, TN: description of the journey down the river by steamboat; money matters. 6 November 1862, Patterson, MO n.d., Patterson, MO: family matters; (end of letter "Hurrah for the Union"). 30 November 1862, Ste. Genevieve, MO: we were to Pilot Knob and back; we expect peace in the spring. 6 December 1862, Helena, Ark: we are 500 miles from St. Louis, close to the enemy; we expect to go to Vicksburg. 11 December 1862, Helena Ark: we went from Ste. Genevieve to Memphis, then Helena; money problems. 16 December, Camp Steele: description of problems for sick soldiers; regiment down to 500 men effective strength (breaks off). before 25 December 1862, opposite Helena, Ark., in Mississippi: Christmas greetings to his family.

FOLDER 2, 1863

8 January 1863, in the field below Helena, Ark.: describes attacks on Vicksburg with heavy losses. 13 January 1863, before Vicksburg (pencil) describes battles at Vicksburg, terrible losses. 20 January 1863, camp near Vicksburg: (letter fragment; very faint) we expect Vicksburg to fall soon. 22 January 1863, near Vicksburg: (pencil) we lost half the regiment in battle or sick. 1 February 1863, camp near Vicksburg: (very faint) on the situation at the siege of Vicksburg. after 14 February 1863, we expect to go from here to Napoleon by the river; HK describes writing letters for other German soldiers. February 1863, after previous letter "In the Field near Vicksburg": describes halt of several days in Napoleon, also mentions Rudolph Kietelkamp. 17 17 February 1863, camp near Vicksburg (a complete transcription has been done of this letter). 16 March 1863, camp before Vicksburg (faint ink) question is whether Vicksburg will be taken or whether the war will be settled by compromise. after 8 April 1863, Greenville, Mississippi: (decorated initials, large format letter) describes action upriver from Vicksburg. 27 April 1863, Milligen's Bend (near Vicksburg), pay received for 4 months, most sent but some kept back in case HK became ill. 10 June 1863, Worpedorf, Germany, Hermann and Adelheit Kuck, to Henry and Metta Kuck: distress over the length of the war in America, over HK's wound. 2 July 1863, n.p., HK to Mr. Christian Koin, Carondelet, MO: (very dim; a note, not a letter) I understand from my wife that my youngest child is very sick; please take care of any needs on my account, and I shall pay. 1 August 1863, camp near Vicksburg 15 August 1863, "Camp Chairman near Vicksburg": on hopes for leave when Vicksburg taken, problem of AWOL soldiers. 11 October 1863, Memphis TN: we are to be sent to Corinth, TN, by rail, describes business done during a recent visit in Carondelet. 18 October 1863, n.p.: ("Liebe Metta" illuminated, "Union" eagle drawn) we are going to Chattanooga by rail; talks of fear of death. 24 October 1863, camp near Tuka: money problems, tells of long march slowed by rebel attacks. 10 November 1863, Bridgeport: (faded ink) description of Bridgeport. 19 November 1863, Bridgeport: ("Union" eagle drawn; faded ink) HK's situation in Bridgeport. 30 November 1863, Chattanooga: (blue paper, faded ink) describes the taking of Lookout Mountain; our regiment along has lost over 100 men as prisoners of war.

FOLDER 3, 1864

1 February 1864, Woodville, ALA: discussion of debts at home. 15 February 1864,

Woodville, ALA: HK has been sick; letter enclosed to go to Germany. 17 February 1864, Camp Proclamation near Woodville, GA: HK has been sick. 25 February 1864, Camp Proclamation near Woodville, GA: praise of military service, but who would have believed the war would last so long? 26 March 1864, Camp Proclamation near Woodville, GA: on friendship. 7 April 1864, Camp Proclamation near Woodville, GA: you want wool blankets, but I am not sure I can send you US government issue legally. 14 April 1864, Camp Proclamation near Woodville, GA: money trouble, apologizes for a joke about MK dancing while HK is gone. 24 April 1864, Camp Proclamation near Woodville, Ga: landlord wants MK out of the house; money promised; we might be sent to Richmond, but that is a secret. 20 May 1864, Kingston, GA: (very hard to read) we soon expect four months' pay; a friend is wounded, description of major action against rebel rail line between Dolton and Atlanta. 22 May 1864, Kingston, GA: (very hard to read) HK tried to send blankets home, couldn't do it. 24 May 1864, n.p. 4 June 1864, n.p.: (faint ink, very hard to read) describes action in upper Georgia from late May on; rebels staged a bayonet-charge on us on the 28th, we dug rifle pits and held them off with losses; with any luck this terrible war could end in 1864. 7 July 1864, Camp near Chattahoochee River: we are 10 miles from Atlanta, we should be able to come home soon. 11 July 1864, Camp near Chattahoochee River: HK can see Atlanta, describes strategy of siege of Atlanta. 26 July 1864, Camp near Atlanta, GA: (faded ink) extensive description of siege of Atlanta, organization of the army involved in the siege. 6 August 1864, Camp near Atlanta: family matters; end appears near for Atlanta. 11 August 1864, Camp near Atlanta: save my letters and the enclosed itinerary; many are dying here in battle. 11 August 1864: (blue paper) HK itinerary, 5 October 1863-11 August 1864 23 October 1864; Chattanooga, TN: ("Liebe Metta" illuminated) describes efforts of rebels to cut communications, asks how close to MK General Price is in Missouri. 12 November 1864, Camp near Chattanooga: problems sending money home. After 12 November 1864, Bridgeport, ALA, fragment: problems of sending money home. 28 November 1864, Bridgeport, ALA: wife's problems with money.

FOLDER 4, 1865

5 January 1865, Bridgeport, ALA: most German units have left here; Sherman is going to Savannah. 31 January 1865, Bridgeport, ALA: family matters. 23 February 1865, Bridgeport, ALA: light duty these days. 11 April 1865, Bridgeport, ALA: (pen-illumination of "Liebe Metta") good that the war is coming to an end. 14 March 1865, Bridgeport, ALA: HK hopes to get out this summer. 8 May 1865, New York: unit just arrived, we will go to Washington, DC, for a march of all Sherman's troops.

FOLDER 5, UNDATED

Undated fragments of letters, mostly in poor condition (in no particular order) 1) routine conclusion of a letter to Metta; 2) another conclusion, regret that HK cannot come to St. Louis just now; he awaits new marching orders; 3) end of letter, reference to a previous mailing of money on 8 November; one soldier has been sent to St. Louis to recruit more soldiers; 4) note of HK to Rudolph Kietelkamp transmitting \$500 in partial payment of a debt; 5) letter fragment, complaint of long marches in the heat; this is the most important campaign of the war; we and General Grant are having good luck; 5) letter of HK to MK, on money problems; 7) after 5 December 18(): family matters, address is 31st MO, 1st Brigade, 1st Division, 15th Army Corps in the Field; 8) fragment HK to MK, pay comes soon, suggests MK buy a barrel of flour; suggests how MK can get goods distributed free to families of volunteers, though this requires going into St. Louis or Carondelet. Photograph

made in Germany by Carl Nuchtern, 18 Spielbudenplatz, St. Pauli, Hamburg, of a man in his 20s in enlisted man's uniform circa 1860s, no distinguishing marks.

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