Letters from the Civil War: Julia Jefferson and Fort Delaware

During the course of the Civil War, Fort Delaware on Pea Patch Island off Delaware City housed approximately 33,000 prisoners of war, primarily Confederate soldiers. The prisoners had few resources and little contact with the outside world. Julia Jefferson of New Castle and her friends wanted to help them. They provided food, clothing, and tobacco. The prisoners sent letters of thanks and requests for help that provide a glimpse into their lives.
Fort Delaware
July 28, 1862

Mrs. John A. Jefferson

I am the recipient of a basket filled with green and canned fruit, box of cigars, cake and cold cuts prepared and sent by you.

It is with pleasure that I have the honor to acknowledge at your hands this delightful treat.

Please accept my most humble and sincere thanks.

With remembrance,

Yours Respectfully,

J.G. Patterson
Fort Delawar, Dec.
July 17, 1863.

Mills Jefferson.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of quite a large amount of delicacies, eatables and supplies for the use of hospital. Accept the thanks of the Great Commanding Officer, Dr. Selkirk and myself, for your kindness.

Great trouble is not him. You can find good stoics, the articles you write about.

The Officers will all leave here to morrow morning.

Dr. Selkirm wishes to return his thanks for the kind offer of the ladies to come down and assist him, and says that it will not be necessary for them to come, as he has plenty of assistance.

Yours Respectfully.

D. F. MacIver

Jul 17, 1863
Dear Miss Jefferson,

April 23, 1865

Miss J. S. Jefferson

I am writing to you from Fort Delaware. Our situation here is quite difficult. We, the Confederate prisoners of war confined in Fort Delaware, do appeal to you for your generosity. Some clothing and shoes are needed, as we stand in need of them. We are cut off from all communication with our friends at present. We appeal to you for assistance, as we will feel forever indebted to you for any act of kindness you may bestow upon us with respect.

Your obedient servant,

E. J. FitzGerald, 1st Confederate, Co. A,

The Mc. Morrow, 18th Georgia Regt.

P. W. McElv. 3rd South Carolina Regt.
Fort Delaware

Sept 29, 1864

Miss Julia T Jefferson

20 years and two months have elapsed since I left this place a prisoner for exchanging near the fortune of war that again overtakes me. I am here the second time, your daughter, yes, I have not forgotten you. Those letters, from a prison in 1862, the recipient of some favors, I have not seen since.

The prison through this castle on Sunday night, I argued for you. Had your mind been well with me, you would have passed through. There in the dark, I have passed through. Behind the iron bars, the same as when the sun shines. The Fort has been unadministered, since 1862. This is the time of the family. Capt. Seaton, who commanded when I was here before. I understand he has become a colorful and new commander. Can it be true? I should have been in the Fort. The time was so finely when the sun shone and I slept. I understand I have not been there. I should be there. This is a man worthy of a man. My address—Capt. W. B. Patterson, 33rd Division Fort Delaware. 33rd Pennsylvania. W. D. Patterson.
Fort Delaware Del.
May 31st 1863.

Mr. J. D. Jefferson: Dear friend:

I have a friend who has been released without transportation or money so far from home and has no friends to assist him. Any assistance you can render him will be considered as a great favor by me. He is a personal friend of mine, and I wish to make for him. I have no idea when I will get away. My friends will be the bearers of this note. Excuse haste and write soon to your friend.

J. W. Keys Co. "Xo"
A. Texas.