

Letter from Asbury Cookman Dishman to his uncle Samuel Oldham Dishman

Apr. 16, 1866

Dear Uncle,

We received your most welcomed letter a short time since, and were overjoyed to hear from you & family. Many wonderful changes have taken place since you left us now upwards 10 yrs. ago; we prospered finely during the first six years of that time, and were fast accumulating a fortune - We were worth about 30 or 40 thousand dollars at the inception of the war - but where is it now! It has taken wings and flown away - we have nothing except our land left (750 acres). When you left us I was a small boy six years old, and now a man in stature, weigh 100 lbs & am 6 feet high. The rest of the children have grown in proportion to their ages. Sister Augusta is in Washington City. The negroes, with which you are acquainted, have since their liberation gone to work; they work the farms on shares - the farmers furnish them with everything and get half of the crop. We have about a hundred and fifty acres cultivated upon those terms. I have eight brothers and sisters - five boys and four girls. Mr. McKenny, Porter, Brown, and a host of others - your old acquaintances, are dead. We are all well at present, have enjoyed remarkable health- have not been compelled to call in a physician for a number of years except upon two occasions. Fillmore lost one of his hands on May 1864 (or part of his hand, he lost his thumb and part of his other fingers.), and Pa was wounded in the battle of Five Forks, the last battle around Richmond, in the right hand, and in the upper part of his arm just above the elbow; of course upon these two occasions we had to call in a doctor. Let this suffice for the present about private affairs. You say you are coming to see us soon, and then you will learn everything - Make haste and come along, for I assure you we are very anxious to see you. We are all going to school.

We have been conquered, and our affairs completely revolutionized. We accept the issue in good part. We staked all and lost all, but did any people on earth ever make a more gallant resistance - did any ever make a more determined effort to become independent? When I say we lost all I mean the issues that were at stake - we have never supposed that we had lost any of the rights guaranteed to us by the Constitution. We thought the Government was trying to prevent us from leaving the Union and consequently losing the rights guaranteed therein. But now a fanatical party springs up and says we have lost our rights as freeman and are trying to degrade, and humiliate us to the utmost extent in their power.

It is useless to say that we hate them with a "perfect hatred." The South is almost a unit in the support of President Johnson - and if necessary will support him by force of arms. The Radicals say that we are too disloyal to be admitted back to the Union, it is not so, we are perfectly loyal, in fact the Southern people were never disloyal to the great principles of the Constitution. They attempted the revolution to preserve it. We thought the time had come

when our Northern brethren would no longer be bound by it, would no longer observe it - and the sequel has proved our fears and expectations to have been but too true. We are more loyal today than the people of the North to the Constitution.

We see through the papers that there is great excitement at the North - that the feeling is intense - on the contrary we are as calm and as quiet as a May day. We watch the struggle with great interest - as we are very closely interested in it. Let the Northern people know this, that we are a Constitution loving people and that we will have our rights sooner or later. I hope you will throw the mantle of charity over the many imperfections of this letter; it has been hastily written & posted, it has been so dark that I could not see the lines to write. Give my best regards to your wife & kiss Cousin Effie for me. When you come & see us bring us your wife's young daughter, & your own ambrotypes.

Hoping to see soon

I am your Nephew

Asbury C. Dishman

P.S. Don't forget the paper
you promised to send us,
I suggest the "Saint Louis Times"
A.D.

***Transcribed from a typewritten copy belonging to Julia Arnold Clews
(Original with Sarah Marsteller Peak, Fincastle, Va.)***

***W. Keith Dishman
July 2004***