



Moses Dennett's Early Years and Civil War Service

by

Scott Dennis and Tim Kendall

Amesbury Carriage Museum
Amesbury, Massachusetts

May 7, 2021

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The Early Years

Moses Morrill Dennett, who would grow up to be a well known Amesbury carriage manufacturer, was born the youngest of five boys on 16 July 1841 in Amesbury Mills. He was first named "Jacob," after an uncle who had died young. Before Moses reached the age of 2 months, his 4 year-old brother, their father's namesake, died in an accident. One version of the family story says that he died from eating poison berries; another version says that, on the way to meet his father coming home from work, he fell off a footbridge and drowned in a creek. In any event, "Jacob" was subsequently re-christened with his brother's (and father's) name. At the time of Moses' birth, his family lived in a two-family house in the heart of Amesbury's mill district. The property was bounded by Pond Street, High Street, and the Salisbury Manufacturing Company, just "a few rods westerly of the large factory" (*Village Transcript*, 19 March 1841, p. 3). Moses' middle name is that of his paternal grandmother, whose father, Moses Sargent Morrill, was a farmer and Revolutionary War soldier who had answered the alarm from Lexington and Concord. The Morrills in the United States went back to Moses' fifth great-grandfather, Abraham Morrill, who was given a land grant in Salisbury in 1640 and built a mill there for grinding corn and wheat. The family of his future wife, Jennie Eastman, also went back to the early days. Her fifth great-grandfather, Roger Eastman, was one of the founders of Salisbury.

Moses described to his grandchildren that:

It seems as but yesterday that I roamed over the hill to pick berries or chased my schoolmates home from school . . . My school master was my own uncle [John Herbert] . . . I used to be full of mischief . . . I recall one afternoon when I was probably yearning for the great outdoors and did not feel like studying, I played some prank and my severe uncle forced me to crouch under his desk . . . I longingly gazed at the apple he had placed on a shelf under his desk. Temptation won, and I ate the apple. I don't know whether he ever discovered this, but he never spoke of it. [Sally Howe Gordon Bixby, "Autobiography of a Grandfather."]

In another piece of mischief, young Moses was going fishing, a lifelong favorite activity of his, but lacked a sinker, so he cut one from his mother's pewter platter. It isn't known if he was punished, but the platter with the missing piece is still in the family.

Moses' father is described alternately as a millwright, a wheelwright, and a machinist, and no doubt inspired Moses' future work with machines and carriages. Sadly, Moses Sr. died of throat cancer in 1855 at the age of 54, forcing Moses to go to work in a cotton mill at age 14 in order to help support his mother. He also worked as an apprentice in a woodworking shop in Merrimac where he learned the trade of carpentry, fine cabinetry and wood finishing.

He was very close to his mother, and he was homesick when the week ended, which would have been Saturday night, because they worked all day Saturday. And I remember he was telling me that he would walk home so he could be with his mother for Sunday. One evening, early on, when he did not know the way very well, he and this group of boys were walking home, and they couldn't decide whether to take this road or that road, and they saw a light in a house. So Grandpa went up to the house. He . . . knocked on the door. And a woman looked out a window from upstairs and said, "Is that you Moses?" Her husband's name was Moses, and she wondered if he was home . . . He told me that they laughed at him for that. And then he would walk back on Sunday night. [Jon Howe, "Owed to Dennett," pp. 21-22.]

Moses' future wife Jennie Eastman was born at the foot of Kearsage Mountain in Wilmot, New Hampshire, on 18 August 1845, the 6th of 12 children. Later on, with just "a hint of persuasion," she would recite the names of her eleven brothers and sisters to her own children. Wilmot was wild country; the children were warned to always watch out for bear traps when they were playing. The children went barefoot during the summer, but Jennie was very resourceful and would cut out pieces of leather and sew them together into moccasins. At the end of the summer, their father took them all by wagon to buy real shoes for school. We know that they raised sheep, carded wool, and spun it into cloth.

One Sunday after they drove home from church, Jennie didn't stop to change her dress but ran straight across to the barn to play where the children would run across the high rafters used for turkey roosts. This day Jennie slipped and fell. As Grandma told it, she was saved only because her dress caught on a nail, and because it was 'all wool and a yard wide,' it tore round and round in one long strip and saved her life. [Jon Howe, p. 25.]

When Jennie finished her rural schooling, she went to Andover Academy, some 8 or 10 miles from home and boarded with a nearby family, doing house work and caring for the children in return.

Enlistment

In April 1861, the Civil War began, and several months later Moses' mother died, leaving him and his brothers to fend for themselves. It was at that point that Moses determined to join the army. However, in August 1861, he had lost his left thumb in an accident when repairing an engine (1891 affidavit).



Moses and his dog Carlo circa 1861. Carlo, famously, would have a delayed reaction upon Moses' return from the war. (Photo courtesy of Jeff Howe.)

On 4 August 1862, President Lincoln issued a call for 300,000 nine-month volunteers to supplement his earlier calls for three-year soldiers. According to Helen Dennett's diary, Moses enlisted on the 29th of August. In September 1862, when the call for volunteers went out to form the 48th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, Moses at once went to the recruiting station in Salisbury. When the recruiting officer saw that he had lost his left thumb, his request to enlist was denied. Moses then garnered the support of the regimental surgeon, Dr. Yorick G. Hurd of Amesbury, who examined him; and they both sent letters to Surgeon General William J. Dale in Boston.

Moses wrote:

*Amesbury Mills, Sept. 3, 1862
To: Wm. J. Dale, Surgeon General*

Sir - I have been examined by Dr. Hurd of this place and been rejected in consequence of having lost the thumb of my left hand. Believing it is in your power to make a special modification of the rule that cuts me off from falling in to the ranks, I most urgently ask that you will do so in my case. I am 21 years of age, weight 145 lbs., never was seriously ill, have a good constitution, of steady habits and withal an unquenchable desire that Our Republic should not be wrecked, and an earnest willingness to do all in my power to prevent its destruction, even to going in unto death if need be: The loss of my thumb does not in the least interfere with my handling the musket :: for these reasons, and the pressing need of the Old Flag for defenders who are not seeking bounty, place or pay. I urge that you may permit me to enter the ranks as a 9 months volunteer. I send an accompanying note from Dr. Hurd. I will furnish other references if desired.

*Very respectfully yours,
Moses M. Dennett*

Dr. Hurd's note read:

*Amesbury Sept. 4, 1862
Surgeon General Dale -*

*Dear Sir -
Moses M. Dennett, age 21, presented to me for examination, has lost his left thumb. In all other respects, he is sound, and able bodied. He is extremely anxious to go into service and it is at his request that I write this line. He is a man of good habits and character. Can he be accepted [?].*

*Very respectfully yours
Y. G. Hurd*

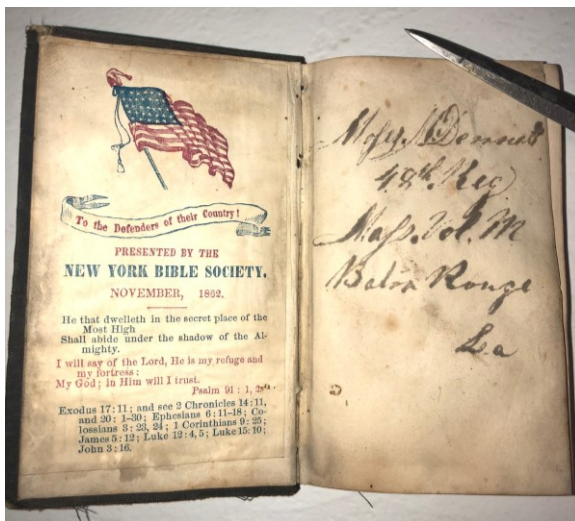
The Surgeon General's assistant returned both letters with the attached note from his superior:

Respectfully returned./ Loss of thumb of either hand is a positive disqualification. The Surgeon General requests that the discharge of his duty compels him to disregard the request so patriotically expressed.

Moses, however, was not to be deterred:

I first tried to enlist in Salisbury, but was rejected because of my missing thumb; I was determined to enlist nevertheless and went to Boston. There they didn't notice my missing thumb until I was going down the stairs. I was recalled by the examiner and questioned about it. I assured him I could fire a musket and he told me to go ahead. [Sally Howe.]

Recruiting had been very slow; volunteers were scarce; and the need for the regiment to take the field was urgent. Moses was officially mustered in at age 21 on 22 October 1862 as a private in Company D of the 48th Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Militia. A Declaration for Pension described him at the time of his enlistment as 5 ft 9 ½ in. tall, of light complexion, with blue eyes, sandy hair, and a carpenter by trade. His official army papers classified him as an engineer. The 48th was commanded by Col. Eben F. Stone, a Harvard graduate, prominent lawyer in Newburyport, state senator, and, later, mayor of Newburyport. Moses occasionally came home on leave, and his cousin Helen Dennett described him as “dressed in uniform and looks quite like a ‘soldier boy’” (November 3). On 4 December the Regiment was moved to Camp Meigs in Readville, Mass., (just south of Boston) apparently in part because of lax military discipline at Camp Lander (Plummer, *History of the Forty-eighth Massachusetts Regiment*, p. 10). Moses’ record has him temporarily deserting on Nov. 5, 1862, likely due to illness. Helen’s diary records that he was too ill to come home from camp with the rest of the boys (November 26). Then on December 2nd he came home “till the Dr. sends for him.” He played checkers with Helen all evening on the 4th and 5th before starting for camp on the 9th using the doctor’s horse and sleigh.



Moses Civil War bible with the inscription:

Moses M. Dennett
48th Reg.
Mass. Vol. M [Militia]
Baton Rouge La

(Courtesy of Jeff Howe.)

The non-denominational American Bible Society distributed over 5 million pocket bibles to soldiers and civilians during the Civil War. (American Bible Society News, September 27, 2009.)

The Regiment Goes to War

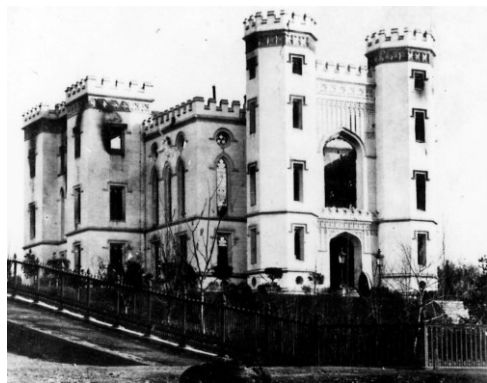
With training completed, Moses' regiment departed for New York on 27 December 1862, and from there two days later embarked on the steamer *Constellation* as part of the Bank's expedition—the fleet of ships and raw troops that sailed from New York to New Orleans with Nathaniel Banks, the Union General replacing Benjamin Butler as commander of the Army of the Gulf (Wikipedia). As Moses later recalled:

After training, I was taken on a transport to Fortress Monroe [off Hampton, Va]. The boat I was on had been a Black Ball Liner. It had carried immigrants to this country. Many had had the spotted fever [probably typhus]. Nowadays it would be an unheard of thing to put young soldiers on a boat, unfumigated and in that condition, but we were loaded on. Many of my comrades died of this fever and were buried at sea. I, luckily, was spared. [Sally Howe]

Plummer's *History* relates these losses as well, describing the sad sight of “the poor fellows launched into the deep dark waves, while their comrades stand nigh with anxious tearful faces” (p. 14). The losses were being felt on the home front also:

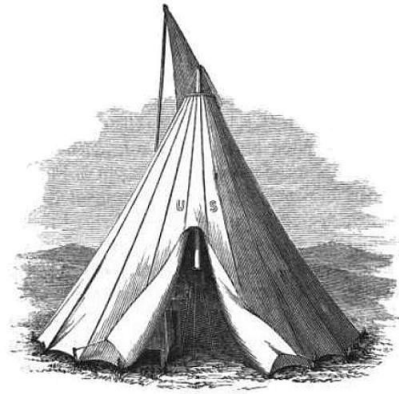
Have been very anxious for a long time to hear from the 48th Regt., as they had not been heard from since leaving Fortress Munroe, Jan. 15th. When Father came home this evening, he said the Regt reached New Orleans, Feb. 1st and Warren Collins died of fever Jan. 28th and was buried at sea. The rest of the Company were well. I can scarcely realize that Warren is dead; it is only a little while since he was with us, full of hope and life, and now, suddenly comes the tidings that he is dead; and rests far away from home, beneath the waves of the Ocean. [The next day] the flags of the Village were all at half mast. [Helen Dennett, diaries, February 10-11, 1863.]

As it made its way up the Mississippi River, the *Constellation* passed remnants of rebel gunboats, stately sugar plantations, and orange groves. Occasionally a white owner looked at them sullenly. “Our only welcome was from the negroes. Their shouts from the levee, accompanied by laughter and frantic gesticulations, bespoke their joy” (Plummer, p. 21). After arriving at New Orleans on February 1st, the 48th was sent 125 miles upriver to Baton Rouge. The sight that greeted the soldiers on board the ship in the morning light was the “grim and ghastly” ruined state capitol, but they were delighted to disembark after 6 weeks aboard ship.



State House, Baton Rouge, La. Burned in December, 1862. (Plummer, frontis.)

They marched to an encampment two miles outside of town. A February 7th letter from an anonymous soldier in the regiment, published in *The Villager* (26 February 1863, p. 2), described the setting up of the camp. Each man carried half a tent that could be buttoned together with another, though the result was essentially a pup tent open at both ends that provided little shelter from the cold and rain. On February 5, the men were supplied with musty old “Sibley” tents that had been left behind by a departing regiment (Plummer, p. 25). *The Villager* letter goes on to describe how the regiment had dismantled “four or five houses” for boards to lay as floors for their tents.



The Sibley tent. (From Wikipedia and *The Prairie Traveler: A Hand-Book for Overland Expeditions* by Randolph Marcy, 1859.)

The day after their arrival, the men visited a deserted sugar plantation a half mile beyond their picket lines, “our object being a little of the ‘sweets’ which might remain in the mill.” In the basement of what was a huge sugar refinery they discovered 60 large tanks of molasses, “and we ‘dipped in’ and filled our canteens.” Moses told his grandchildren of the time when “they came to a sugar mill after they had been without sugar for a long time. Some of the soldiers threw away their rations and left loaded with sugar—much to their regret when they got hungry” (John Howe II, “Howe Family History,” p. 27).

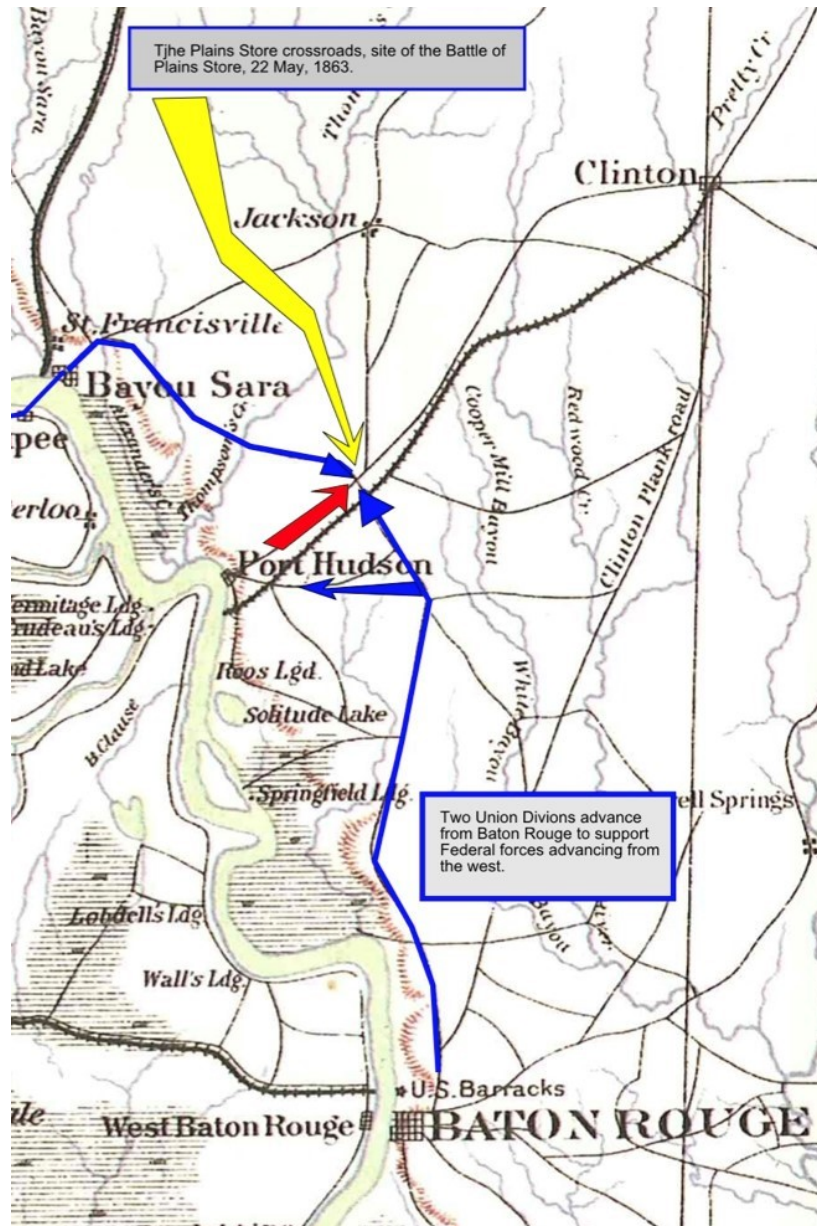
Plummer reports that “Many of our most rugged men yielded to the fatal miasma with which the night air is laden, and . . . went daily at the surgeon’s call to get their dose of quinine. Death came and mustered out many. Funerals were . . . daily” (p. 24). Moses told his grandchildren the story of how “the food was often terrible and the soldiers would say to their meat dish:

*“Old horse, old horse, what brings you here?
From Fanuel Hall to Portland Pier
You’ve hauled big carts for many a year
And when you died of hard abuse,
You were salted down for soldiers’ use.”*

(John Howe II, p. 29. Poem is likely derived from a very similar sea chanty about sailor’s food dating to 1830’s Maine.
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/songstorysamplercollection/27/>)

The Siege of Port Hudson

The regiment was assigned to the 1st Brigade of General Augur's (1st) Division. On February 6th the soldiers were given muskets and ammunition. After a month of picket duty and drilling, the regiment boarded a steamer on March 13th for a reconnaissance mission to Port Hudson, about 22 miles upriver of Baton Rouge. Meant to complement the fortified river bluffs at Vicksburg, Mississippi, Port Hudson protected the shipment of supplies from Texas to the Confederate heartland.



Map of the Port Hudson area with Plains Store at the intersection of arrows to the northeast and Springfield Landing to the south. The lower blue line marks the road from Baton Rouge to Port Hudson and route of march for the 48th Regiment in March, May and June, 1863. (From "Siege of Port Hudson," Wikipedia.)

Located at a sharp bend in the river, the 4-mile-long fortification on 40-foot-high bluffs was perfectly situated to pour cannon fire down onto passing ships and presented a major obstacle to the Union conquest of the Mississippi. This huge, impregnable fort, ranked second only to Vicksburg in importance for opening up river traffic, had become the objective of Augur's Division and thus of Moses' regiment (Plummer, pp. 19-20).

The steamer carrying the 48th to Port Hudson was accompanied by the gunboat *Essex* "which occasionally threw a shell into the woods along the shore." The soldiers disembarked a few miles below Port Hudson, but the river was swollen by spring runoff, and the men had to ford waist-high water to get to the bluff a quarter mile away. They later encountered Confederate pickets and captured a member of a guerrilla band before stopping at a plantation at noon where "the confiscation law was . . . vigorously and thoroughly enforced. Within a few minutes after our arrival the feathered inhabitants of the plantation had nothing further to say" (Plummer, p. 26). Whether here or on a different forage, Moses told the story to his grandchildren of the time his group was assigned to go and forage for supplies and horses. At one plantation the soldiers took a pony with the horses. A little girl ran out and begged, "Please don't take my pony," but she was ignored (John Howe II, p. 27). The regiment then marched back to Baton Rouge arriving at 9 PM, only to decamp at 3 AM and retrace their steps on the road back toward Port Hudson. Starting off with heavy knapsacks, a full supply of cartridges, and two days' rations, they were at first enjoying the scenery of the Southern forest road on a cool morning. With the day's heat, however, "our burdens seemed heavier and heavier every moment and every step was agony . . . on we plodded through clouds of dust. No wonder that some of the boys sank by the side of the road exhausted only to come up late in the evening after the regiment had bivouacked" (Plummer, pp. 27-28). Bedding down in a corn field, they were awakened by shells arcing through the night sky toward Port Hudson from Admiral Farragut's gunboats. Toward dawn they were startled by a brilliant flash of light, which turned out to be the explosion of the Union warship *Mississippi*, which had been shelled trying to run past Port Hudson. The next day the regiment was guarding a bridge and witnessed the return of soldiers who had fired on Port Hudson in a feint intended to draw attention away from Farragut's fleet on the river.

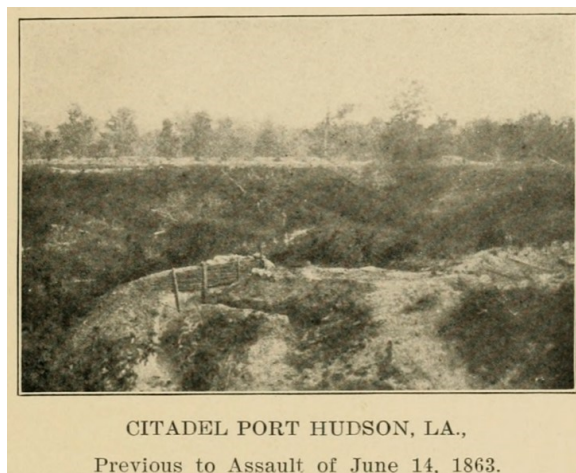


Moses' Civil War artifacts. Moses appears to have collected or been given items in addition to those issued to him. The canteen is his. (Photo courtesy of Rob Gordon.)

Returning to Baton Rouge, March 20th, the regiment resumed guard duty until May 18th when it again marched 16 miles up the road toward Port Hudson. Moses told his grandchildren of a time, “after a very long march, orders were given to find whatever place they could . . . to sleep for the night. Grandpa said he was so exhausted he paid no attention as to where he laid out his blanket. In the morning he was awakened by grunts and found he’d slept in a pig pen” (John Howe II, p. 27).

The regiment was attached to Col. Dudley's (3rd) Brigade for what was to be the main attack on Port Hudson. Early in the morning of May 21 the division received its baptism of fire as it drew near the crossroads of Plains Store and Bayou Sara roads on the way to secure a landing on the river for General Banks. A skirmish ensued and progressed into a general engagement marking the beginning of the siege of Port Hudson. Moses' regiment lost two killed, seven wounded, and eleven captured. For the siege, Banks had assembled roughly 30,000 Union troops pitted against some 6,800 Confederates in and about the fortress. However, withering fire from the impregnable fort cost attacking Union troops dearly.

Port Hudson was just as formidable on the land side as on the river bluff. It was surrounded by a high parapet, in front of which was a 10-foot wide ditch. Into this ditch and for some distance out, the Confederates had cut up trees forming an obstacle-filled field of fire for the men in the rifle pits on the parapet above the ditch (Plummer, pp. 19-20). On May 24th, Moses' regiment arrived in front of Port Hudson. Three days later an assault was ordered on the guns, and 92 officers and men of the 48th responded to a call for volunteers for the aptly named “Forlorn Hope” unit that was to charge the enemy works ahead of the brigade. In the battle, which took place in the mid-afternoon of the 27th, the storming column and the main line became intermingled, confusion ensued, and the attack failed. Lieut. Col. O'Brien and six others of the 48th were killed and 41 were wounded (“48th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment,” Wikipedia). Two African-American regiments also took part in the same assault. The assault failed largely because General Banks failed to coordinate the attacking elements, and the Confederate defenders were able to shift men to repulse attacks serially.



Port Hudson Citadel, showing the ditch with its felled trees in front of the landward side of the fortress. (Plummer, opp. p. 32.)

Plummer reports that “As we came back from the front, we had our first sight of the dreadful effects of a battle and burial of the dead in one line, about twenty dead bodies at the side of the road, and the long trench all ready to receive them” (p. 38). Many of the men by this point were suffering from “malaria and kindred ailments, acquired from lying in the rifle pits, which are much of the time half full of water” (p. 40).

From June 5 to 13, the 48th was again at Plains Store, where it was ordered to the Union left and was temporarily attached to Emory’s (3rd) Division with which it took part in the Port Hudson assault of June 14, losing two killed and eleven wounded. Again, an uncoordinated frontal assault failed: “The air fairly hissed with bullets and shell . . . when we came into the vortex and saw the ground swept as it were by a whirlwind, and every man sought shelter in ravines, behind stumps, logs and any object which could afford shelter” (Plummer, p. 43). Following the assault, the 48th would continue to occupy trenches in front of Port Hudson until July 9 when the city surrendered. As the siege of Port Hudson continued from May to July, the Confederates had nearly exhausted their ammunition and were reduced to eating mules, horses and rats. After Vicksburg surrendered to General Grant on July 4th, Port Hudson quickly followed. On 9 July 1863, after a 48-day siege and some five thousand casualties, the Union army entered Port Hudson and thus secured control of the Mississippi River.

Moses’ Injury

At some point during the siege, Moses suffered a serious injury while fording the bayou at Springfield Landing, halfway between Port Hudson and Baton Rouge on the river (see map, page 8). While it was possible he was part of an action on July 2nd to repel Confederate raiders there (Plummer, p. 46), one of the affidavits for his pension application describes him as being injured in “early summer,” another in the “middle of June”; and Moses’ own affidavit specifies June 10th (see Appendix B, page 21). So it is more likely that he was injured during an earlier foraging expedition—Moses own affidavit describes him as riding a “captured mule.” Or he simply could have been en route to or from Baton Rouge; Springfield Landing at this point was a Union supply depot. Per the pension affidavits, Moses suffered injuries on subsequent days, first twisting his leg badly while fording the bayou, then being thrown from a mule. As Thomas Lamb’s affidavit attests:

[Moses’] leg was hurt so that the veins were all broke down enlarged and knotted and looked as though they would burst open, and he could not walk. I was present when he was thrown off a mule he was riding. He was riding along with Surgeon Y. G. Hurd of our regiment, when the mule kicked up and threw him over his head and ruptured him . . . From the time we went to Baton Rouge, La, he had diarrhea and chills and fever until we were discharged and was doctored here in this place [Amesbury] after we got home for the same troubles[sic] and for malaria ...

Edward P. Osgood attested that “at Baton Rouge La. [Moses] contracted malarial fever with chills and diarrhea and continued to have that disease to the date of his discharge . . . complained of pain in his right and left side under the short ribs, looked sallow . . .” Disease was by far the largest cause of casualties in the Civil War, removing soldiers from the battlefield at twice the rate of bullet wounds (“United States military casualties of war,” Wikipedia).

Mustering Out

Likely without Moses, the 48th Regiment moved on to Donaldsonville on July 9-10. On July 13, they engaged in battle at Bayou Lafourche a few miles from Donaldsonville, losing 65 of 201 men killed, wounded, and captured. On August 1st, the regiment returned to Baton Rouge and remained in camp until August 9th, when it boarded the transport *Sunny South* and started for Cairo, Ill. Ironically, Moses’ brother Sewell, stationed at Roanoke Island, N.C., had written him humorously on a cold March morning in 1863, with his fingers freezing: “Moses how do yew Like the Solgers Life in the Sunny South.” Now the *Sunny South* was taking Moses north on the liberated Mississippi. Passing Port Hudson that morning, Moses no doubt suffered along with the others from the searing heat on deck. He certainly shared the sentiments of the regiment’s historian:

Home! Can any outside the army imagine what this word means to us who have lain so many weary weeks in the swamps of Louisiana, watching the lines of the enemy with [their] eyes of hungry wolves, dying by hundreds, by bullet, and shell, and disease. It means friends, comfort, life itself, in exchange for misery, squallor, dirt, a dog's life, and death, and an unknown grave [Plummer, p. 51].

On August 12th they passed Vicksburg; on August 15th they reached Memphis; and on the 17th they arrived at Cairo and transferred to rail cars. In Cairo came the last casualty of the campaign when John Brown of Amesbury died of sunstroke (*The Villager*, 27 Aug, 1863, p. 2). Then began a slow train ride east to Boston. They were delayed on sidings to make way for trains headed to the front, and they stopped to receive free food from grateful citizens along the way—until, ironically, they got to Massachusetts, “the first to ask her returning soldiers to pay for their rations.” At last on Sunday, August 23rd, they arrived in Boston where they were furloughed, and took the train to Amesbury. Helen Dennett describes meeting Moses: “we heard the whistle and knew the 48th were coming, we left the church and hurried down to the Depot. Mosie was the first one that I saw, he is looking better than when he went away; they are all very tired, it is two weeks since they left Port Hudson.” On September 3rd Moses and his comrades reported back to Camp Lander at Wenham and were honorably mustered out. Total casualties for the 48th during this campaign: 23 killed, 73 wounded, 40 dead of disease (Plummer, p. 61).

Moses' Service

Absent discovery of Moses' Civil War letters we may never know for certain what his specific role was in the actions of his regiment described above. We know from family artifacts that he was likely issued a musket, bayonet and canteen. We know that he participated in the reconnaissance mission to Port Hudson from March 13-20, 1863, because his brother Charles begins an April 30 letter to him: "I have not received any letter from you for some time not since you went to Port Hudson" (see Appendix D). Moses' tales to his grandchildren about foraging for horses and sleeping in a pig pen show that he marched with his regiment, and his granddaughter recalled him saying "I then was in battle at Baton Rouge . . . I won't tell you small children of the hardships and sufferings we passed through there" (Sally Howe). Whether these incidents occurred on the March or May missions is not known. He may not have been well enough to participate in the May mission. His Aunt Susie Herbert acknowledges receiving a letter from him on May 23rd and says "I was very sorry to learn that you have been sick, though I am not surprised . . . I have understood that exposure to the sun, the evening air, together with the bad water are the causes of many of the fevers of that hot climate. . . . Oh, how I do wish this war was ended. Moses I reckon by this time you have seen some of the horrors of war" (see Appendix E). Indeed, Moses had already witnessed the casualties from disease both on the *Constellation* and at the Baton Rouge encampment.

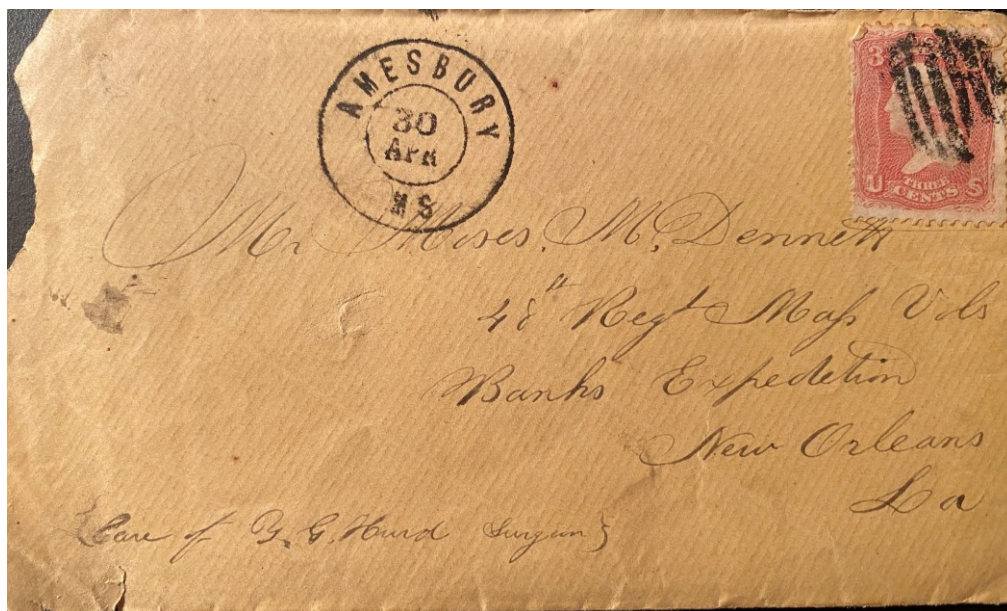
What is clear is that Moses was a non-combatant. He told his cousin in October 1862 "that he was going to the war as surgeon's aide" (Helen Dennett, October 17), and the envelopes of at least three family letters to him were addressed in care of Dr. Hurd, the regimental surgeon, including Helen's letter of March 1, 1863, when Moses had been in Baton Rouge less than a month (see Appendix C on page 22). Dr. Hurd knew Moses from his enlistment effort, and perhaps took him under his wing admiring his patriotism and concerned over the difficulty that Moses would have in handling a heavy musket without his left thumb. Aunt Susie Herbert Thom's letter of March 18th reinforces the theory of Moses' medical role: "Are you obliged to camp out, or do you remain in the Hospital? Is there much sickness at present in your region? Doubtless you are obliged to witness a little of the horrors of war, being associated with the sick and wounded." He was obliged to camp out, but it was likely in the role of providing medical support either as a stretcher bearer or as a direct assistant to Dr. Hurd. Thomas Lamb's pension affidavit mentions that Moses was riding with Dr. Hurd when the mule injured him in June. Some combination of illness and lameness may have subsequently shifted his role to Baton Rouge.

The 48th Regiment's Company D Muster Roll lists Moses as Absent from Company D for May and June 1863, with the notation: "Hospl. attendant now at Baton Rouge La.," whereas the notations for January/February, and for March/April, list him as "Present."

Whatever his specific role, Moses had further been exposed to the horrors of war with the numerous casualties from the skirmishing and frontal assaults at Port Hudson. An assignment to a Baton Rouge hospital would merely have concentrated his exposure to those horrors, which Moses always carefully refrained from discussing with his children and grandchildren.

D | 48 | Mass. Mil.
 Moses M. Dennett
 Pr't, Co. D, 48 Reg't Mass. Militia.
 Appears on
 Company Muster Roll
 for May & June, 1863
 Present or absent Absent
 Stoppage, \$ 100 for
 Due Gov't, \$ 100 for
 Remarks: Hospl attendant
 now at Baton Rouge
 La.

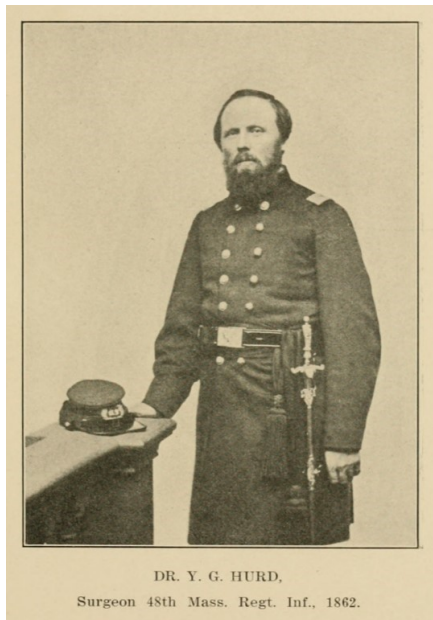
Company D muster roll showing Moses assigned to hospital duty. (National Archives, Military Service Records.)



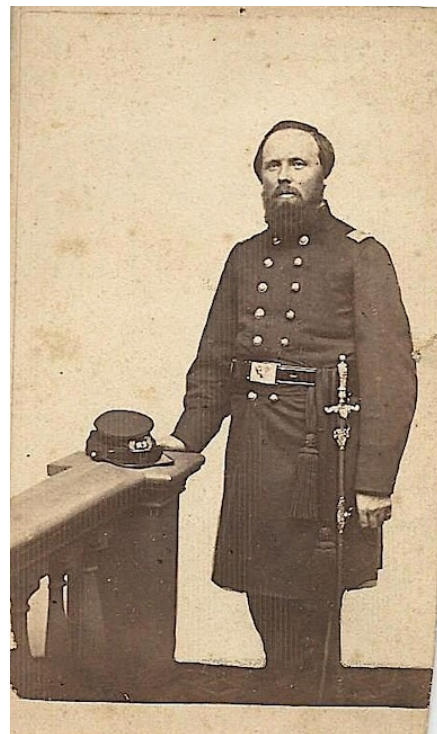
Envelope of Charles Dennett's 1863 letter addressed to Moses "Care of Y. G. Hurd Surgeon." (Courtesy of Rob Gordon.)

“Dr. Yorick G. Hurd was one of the best surgeons of the Civil War. The death rate from sickness in our regiment was less than in any other in the Department, and that was due in great part to the faithful, conscientious, and untiring services of Dr. Hurd” (Plummer, p. 63).

On the frontispiece of his 1907 *History of the Forty-eighth Massachusetts Regiment*, Albert Plummer used a photo of Dr. Hurd taken by the Clarkson shop in Amesbury. Known as *carte de visite*, these small photo cards became popular during the Civil War because they were easily mailed, traded or given to loved ones as mementos. Hurd presented Moses Dennett with the one below that is still in the family. If Moses had such a photo card made in his uniform, it has not surfaced.



Dr. Y. G. Hurd portrait from frontispiece of *History of the Forty-eighth Massachusetts Regiment* by Albert Plummer.



Dr. Hurd's photo card, given to Moses as a memento of their service together in the 48th. (Courtesy of Douglas Frazier). The belt, sash, and sword were given to Hurd by Amesbury friends on the occasion of his assignment as the Regimental Surgeon (*The Villager*, December 11, 1862, p. 2).

Moses' Return

When Moses returned to Amesbury in September 1863, after serving over 10 months in the army, he was, despite Helen's assessment, injured and in poor health. There was no home waiting for him except that of his brother Charles. Charles, in poor health himself, was anguished about the prospect of being drafted and having to leave his wife and children. Their brother Sewell had been discharged from a 9-month tour just a month before Moses, but Sewell would re-enlist in January 1864, be wounded and captured at Gainesville, Florida, in August 1864, and die that October in Andersonville prison. His brother Alfred would enlist in August 1864 and spend the last half of his one-year tour in hospitals for an undisclosed injury that troubled him throughout his life. To make matters worse, upon Moses' return, his beloved dog Carlo, whom Charles and his family had cared for in his absence, no longer knew him. As Moses recalled:

When I came home, Carlo came out to meet me as any stranger. To my grief and disappointment my old comrade didn't know me. He sniffed at my clothes but walked away. I went into the house and sat down with the people. Carlo sniffed of me increasingly. All at once, as if he had gone wild, he leaped over the chairs and bounded through the house. Yes! He knew his old master. Charles' wife and relatives were much grieved. Would he be forced to go to war if drafted? I listened to their cries and wails for a day. Then I thought of myself. No one cared whether I went to fight once or a hundred times. So I told them I would go in Charles' stead if he was called. He was not called, but I enlisted a second time. Shortly after this, peace was declared. Much to my deep sorrow I never saw my devoted dog Carlo again. He wandered away and died after I had gone to war the second time. [Sally Howe.]

There is no military record of this second enlistment, but the story is credible and perhaps occurred late enough in the war that Moses' enlistment wasn't recorded.

Marriage and Beyond

Helen Dennett tells us that Moses went to work for his Uncle Horatio in Lawrence in October 1863. Horatio is listed in the 1870 Lawrence census as a carriage maker and probably gave Moses his start in the carriage industry. Recall that we left young Jennie Eastman in New Hampshire:

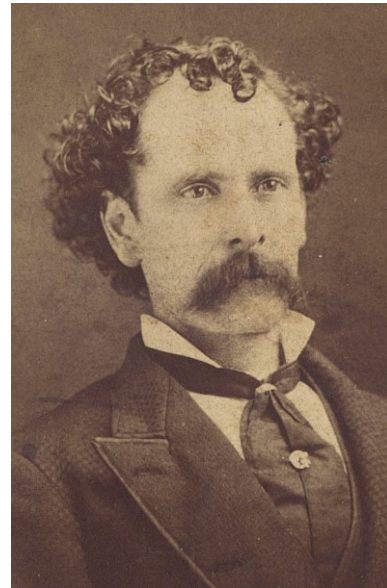
After graduating from Andover Academy, like so many young ladies of her time, Jennie went to Lawrence, Mass. to work in the thriving woolen mills. Several girls lived together in rooming houses—quite an experience for a farm girl from Wilmot Flat. One Sunday (and it must have been Sunday because at that time everyone worked all day on Saturday), a young man came up from Salisbury to visit one of the girls and brought with him a friend who had just returned from the Civil War, a handsome young man with blue eyes and deep, auburn curly hair. His name was Moses Morrill Dennett Jr. and when he met Jennie it was love at first sight. No one

knew that he had taken her picture from the parlor table until he had it copied and returned it the next week. They were married on September 17, 1867, when she was 22 and he was 26. it was a happy marriage for 63 years. (Jon Howe, p. 25.)

While his grandchildren knew him as a gray-haired man with his trademark handlebar mustache, looking very much like Mark Twain, “in his younger years he cut quite a figure, tall and erect, beautiful curly auburn hair . . . friendly, kind, ‘a joiner’—an extrovert” (John Howe II, p. 26). Both before and after the war, Moses was a member of the Salisbury Dramatic Club and gave several theatrical performances (see for example the *The Villager*, 24 April 1862, p. 3, as part of a May Day celebration).



Photo of a young Jennie Eastman, possibly the one that Moses purloined in order to copy it. (Courtesy of Jon Howe.)



Jennie’s curly-, auburn-haired suitor Moses Dennett, said to resemble Mark Twain. (Courtesy of Jon Howe.)



1870 certificate of appreciation for Moses’ Civil War service. (Courtesy of Jeff Howe.)

Moses went on to become a carriage manufacturer in Amesbury, as described in a separate article, but his Civil War service remained a key part of his identity.

He was a charter member of the E. P. Wallace G.A.R. Post in Amesbury and served at various times as its Commander, Vice-Commander, Chaplain, and Patriotic Instructor. For most of the rest of his life, Moses worked to honor fallen soldiers on Lincoln's Birthday and Decoration Day, the original name for Memorial Day because of its custom of decorating veterans' graves with flowers. Decoration Day was sponsored by the Women's Relief Corps, the G.A.R. women's auxiliary, of which Jennie was an active member. Sally Howe recollected that Moses always led the Decoration Day parade from Market Square to the Mount Prospect Cemetery. He later marched with his grandson Dennett Howe, who recalled:

The veterans would don their uniforms and march to the cemetery . . . We would go down to Amesbury at Memorial Day . . . Mother made me a blue suit to wear and a cap and I would march with my grandfather. I probably was six or seven [circa 1915]. I would walk with him and the other veterans. I did that for a few years. I remember the last time that the veterans ever gathered together as a group to go to the cemetery they rode in a long covered wagon drawn by four horses with a row of seats on either side in the back. [Jon Howe, p. 29. Likely this is 1923, when the Amesbury Daily News on May 31, p. 2, reports that the G.A.R. members rode in a "large truck."]

Moses took his role of Patriotic Instructor seriously. He led numerous flag ceremonies and gave many heartfelt, patriotic speeches, such as the one to Amesbury High School students that is found in Appendix A. For Veteran's Day 1929, as one of four surviving members of the G.A.R. Post, he compiled and presented to the Amesbury Public Library a list of all 400 Amesbury soldiers and sailors who took part in the Civil War (*Amesbury Daily News*, 11 November 1929, p. 4). He was also President of the 48th Regiment Association, which periodically held reunions and sponsored "encampments" where the veterans could gather at "campfires" to reminisce about their experiences in a way that they could not with their families (see for example the *Amesbury Daily News*, 20 August 1917, p. 2).



Post card captioned on the back "Snap shot of the Old Grand Army G.A.R. Post." Moses is likely the man on the far right, sporting his trademark curled handlebar mustache. The veteran with the cane and goatee next to Moses is very likely Joseph Oliver Stearns, the husband of Moses' cousin Helen Dennett and the man who painted Moses' new house on Powow Hill in 1887. (Courtesy of Rob Gordon.)

At his death in 1930, Moses, having attended countless funerals of his Civil War comrades, was one of just three remaining Amesbury Civil War veterans (*Amesbury Daily News*, 5 February 1930, p. 6). Just one month after the passing of his beloved Jennie in 1930, it was his turn for the final mustering out. According to one family story, he was buried in his uniform (Jon Howe, p. 29). The first inscription after his name on his tomb at Mount Prospect Cemetery is: "48th Reg. M.V.M."

Appendix A: Moses' Speech at Amesbury High School

Text of this speech courtesy of Douglas Frazier. Date unknown. For a similar speech, see "Unusually Fine Address at High School by Acting Commander Dennett," Amesbury Daily News, 28 May 1921, p. 1.

Moses M. Dennett
Past Post Commander, E.P. Wallace Post
Grand Army of the Republic

Professor Brown, it has been my privilege to have the honor for a number of years to visit the Amesbury High School and to witness your Memorial exercises and I assure you it has always given me a great deal of pleasure to do so.

It would be more satisfactory to the Post to have a larger number of the comrades detailed to visit your school on this occasion, for I am sure that the children look forward to these visits and that they would appreciate hearing of the Civil War from the men who participated in it. But owing to the thinning of our ranks, we are hardly able to detail sufficient comrades to visit the several schools in town. Today with rapidly diminishing numbers we dwell upon the glories of the past and with throbbing hearts pay tribute to the great host that has gone on before, and whose ranks we shall alas too soon join for we are standing on the threshold; we are at the open door; we are marching on to that border-land where we never marched before.

I wish I had the gift of oratory that I might express in words the kindly feelings towards those boys of ours who fought the World War. Noble sons of sires. They fought the good fight. They kept the pace; they won the victory. Let this nation thank God that it still breeds the race of men who when our country was in peril and our flag was in danger rallied so nobly to the nation's defense as did the boys of '61.

If any of the comrades were to make any remarks on this occasion their thoughts would naturally drift along a line pertaining to the Civil War, and it is right and proper that there should be a representative of that great Grand Army here today. Not only that our children should keep in mind the great sacrifices of that war but the important bearing it had in making this nation a world power.

Also, as an object lesson. How few realize the fact that the decision or the outcome of the Civil War was the prime factor in giving the allied armies the victory. If the

Confederate Army had won the war this nation would have been a broken and dismembered fragment of a once glorious union. With the union of the states divided it would have been impossible to have thrown the tremendous resources of this great and powerful nation into the World War. Had the confederacy triumphed two separate republics would have confronted each other, North and South of a geographical line which would have bristled with cannon.

The Civil War showed the saving power that rests in the youth of a nation. A vast number of the soldiers were not more than seventeen or eighteen years old and a great many were only fifteen or sixteen. The strength of the nation was as the strength of these boys of '61. It is fitting boys and girls of this generation should pay honor to these gray haired veterans who in the flower of their youth were willing to give their lives in order that the stars and stripes might wave over a nation of freemen. Fifteen out of every 100 lost their lives in the Civil War. The children of the republic must never forget the men who served the republic in the four years of the Civil War from '61 to '65. The pupils of our public schools today salute the flag which has never lost a star, because of the loyalty and courage and sacrifices of the veterans living or dead of the Grand Army.

The soldiers of the Civil War were not for the most part regulars, carefully drilled, that is true, but after four years of war they got a soldier's bearing; they learned the lesson. For what they did and for what they dared, remember them today. If other eyes grow dull and other hands slack and other hearts cold in this solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as light and warmth of life remains to us.

*Emblem and legend may fade from the portal,
Keystone may crumble and pillars may fall.
They were the builders whose work is immortal,
Crowned by the dome that is over us all.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes

[Final stanza of "Memorial Hall Hymn," 1870]

Appendix B: Moses' Pension Affidavit

From National Archives, Military Service Records.

A **DECLARATION FOR ORIGINAL INVALID PENSION.** **A**

State of Massachusetts
Essex County, } SS.

On this 28th day of Sept, A. D. one thousand eight hundred and ninety three
personally appeared before me, a Notary Public of the County and State aforesaid, Moses M. Dennett aged
51 years, a resident of the Town of Amesbury, county of Essex, State of Mass., who, being duly sworn according to law, declares
that he is the identical Moses M. Dennett who was ENROLLED on
the 22 day of Oct, 1862, in Company D of the 48 Regiment
of Mass commanded by Winham Mass
and was honorably DISCHARGED at Springfield on the 3rd day
of Sept, 1863; that his personal description is as follows: Age, 51 years; height
..... feet inches; complexion,; hair,; eyes,
That while a member of the organization aforesaid, in the service and in the line of his duty at Springfield
Lauding, in the State of La. on or about the 10 day
of Jan, 1863, he sustained an injury to his leg
Here state name or nature of disease, or the location of wound or injury. If disabled by
disease, state fully its cause; if by wound or injury, the precise manner in which received.
while fording a bayou, which resulted in varicose
veins. Also at same place on the following day
while riding a captured mule he was thrown forward
and off from said mule, causing a rupture (scrotal)
Also at Baton Rouge La., he was sick with
Malaria which disease continued until it resulted in
permanent affection of kidneys liver & spleen
That he was treated in hospitals as follows: Here state the names or numbers and the localities of all hospitals in which treated, and the dates
of treatment.
At Baton Rouge, La., for malaria
That he has not been employed in the military or naval service otherwise than as stated above. Here state what
the service was, whether prior or subsequent to that stated above, and the dates at which it began and ended.
That since leaving the service this applicant has resided in the State of Mass.
in the State of Mass., and his occupation has been that of a Carrriage Maker
That prior to his entry into the service above named he was a man of good, sound, physical health, being when
enrolled a That he is now 3/3 disabled from obtaining his subsistence by
manual labor by reason of his injuries, above described, received in the service of the United States; and he there-
fore makes this declaration for the purpose of being placed on the invalid pension roll of the United States.
He hereby appoints, with full power of substitution and revocation WINWARD & SEMANS,
WINWARD, of WASHINGTON, D. C. his true and lawful Attorney
to prosecute his claim. That he has not received but has applied for a Pension under act June 27th 1900 Rejected. That his
Post-Office Address is Amesbury county of Essex
State of Mass.
Claimant's signature M. M. Dennett
ATTEST: Edward P. Wallace
Notary Public

Appendix C: Cousin Helen Dennett Letter to Moses

Addressed: Co. C 48th Regiment, Mass VM, Banks Expedition Baton Rouge via New Orleans, La, care of Dr. G. Hurd Surgeon. Postmarked "Amesbury 17 March." (Letter courtesy of Doug Frazer. Annotations courtesy of Ruth Stearns.)

Salisbury, March 1st/63

Dear Mosie, "Cousin", away out in "Dixie", this is the first day of Spring here; has been snowing all the morning; now it is raining; tomorrow it will be "slosh and mud", and this is a fair specimen of the winter we have had; it is hardly worth calling a winter; we have not had more than a week of real cold weather take all together, through the winter. Yesterday it was quite warm, in the evening, which was a bright, moonlight one. Franc Sargent [Mary Francis Sargent] and I walked down to the Ferry, it was very good walking. This, I think, is unusual for the last day of February in New England. I have been expecting to hear from you for some time. Have been to the office every day but as yet there has been "nothing for me", hope I shall be more fortunate this week; I have dreamed several times lately of receiving a letter from you, and also of seeing you. I have almost begun to believe the old saying that "Dreams always go by contraries" for I have neither seen or heard from you yet; I can hardly believe you are so far away from home. I think of you twenty times a day (more or less), and try to imagine what kind of a place you are at and what you are doing, and wish I could happen into "camp" once in a while; and I dare say, or at least I hope, you often think of friends at home, and when you do think of them "don't forget me". What a change it must be for you from "bleak New England to the Sunny South".

We were for some time quite anxious about the 48th Regiment, it seemed such a long time after they sailed before we heard anything about them; but I little thought the first tidings would be that Warren was dead. I can hardly realize now that he is dead, it seems as though he must be there with the rest of you, and it seems so hard that he should be buried at sea. His mother and sister have dressed in black; we received the news Tuesday Feb 10th, the flags of the village were all at half mast the next day.

I expect there will be a draft soon, it is talked about now; wonder if there will ever be an end.

There is to be a Levee [reception] here this week, Thursday, which I expect will be the most "wonderful thing that ever was, in the two towns;

The new mill is finished , except the wheel and machinery, and the Levee is to be in the fourth story of the mill, it will be a splendid place. I have heard it estimated that it will contain three thousand people, do not believe however will be very crowded. I believe almost "everybody" around here intends to go; it is for the benefit of the Soldiers' Aid Society; The managers are nearly all opposed to dancing (see 5th page) but I have

heard it said that Mr. Steer¹ wishes to have a dance after the Levee, and, of course if Mr. Steer wants dancing they will have it.

Worthen [James Worthen Dennett, Helen's brother] came home a week ago last night and staid till Monday morning, it is the first time he has been at home since Thanksgiving. The young man he rooms with in Lawrence, Joseph Henshaw, came down with him; perhaps you will remember this Mr. Henshaw, he learned his trade with Uncle Horatio [also Moses' uncle] a number of years ago, and works for him; he is a "pretty appearing fellow", but is not "pretty"; They had been talking all winter of coming down to a sleighride, but as there was no sleighing, they head to come in the cars; they talk some of coming down this week to the Levee.

I have been to work over to John Humes for the last four weeks, shall soon finish my trade, like it very much indeed;

I see Alfred [Moses' brother] once in a while but not often, he had a letter from Sewell [Moses' brother] not long since, he was at Newbern [NC] in excellent health; May Frank was very sick one week but is nicely now. "Carlo" [Moses' dog] comes up here as usual two or three times a week, he only stops long enough to get "something to eat", and then he is off;

Luetta [Brown] is still here, and is not yet married; Father keeps telling her, that she ought to marry her Charlie [Charles Brighton married Luetta in December], so that he might escape the first draft, as it takes the single men first; Charlie Wm. Morrill and Susie Gale were married week before last; they are boarding at the Gale's.

I hardly know how to direct this letter so I will say with the Irishman "if you don't get it, write and let me know;, and will close with the good advice "Take good care of your health and write often."

Helen

8 1/1 o'clock in the evening. Rain.

I have often heard it said that a "woman's" letter was never finished without a "Post Script", and find I am no exception to the general rule this time; I closed this letter the first time in order to write to Worthen, which makes the third letter I have written today, and as I have finished his letter I will write a little more on this; I guess you will

¹ Mr. Steer is Marquis De Lafayette Steere, agent at a woolen mill (1880). In *Legendary Locals of Amesbury* by Margie Walker is a photo of Marquis de Lafayette Steere at a wedding. It says "he started work in a woolen mill when he was a young boy, making \$8 per week. In 1858 he took charge of the Salisbury Woolen Mill. He became a silent partner with Biddle and Smart, the largest company at the time. He was one of the planners of the Powow Water Company and he organized the Amesbury & Salisbury Gas Company. He brought the opera house to town" (p. 38).

be tired of reading these “scribblings” (if you ever get it) But the fact is I do like to write a good long letter “if it is half nonsense?, so I sometimes write everything to “fill up”; I must not forget our new house, it is not “quite” done yet; am in hopes it will be done by the time you get home next Summer; Father has got the doors and windows ready and the blinds painted, will be ready to commence on it as soon as the frost is out of the ground; I will send you a plan of the house when I have a chance to draw it off. I expect there will be considerable building this Spring; those that have got money want to invest it in real estate for fear the banks will fail; The last day of the month, the 31st day of March, will be my birth-day, shall be “twenty years old”, send me a little present of some kind, something to remember Dixie land by, If you have patience to read this through, perhaps I will write again soon, our folks are all well and send their love, Write soon, Helen

Appendix D: Brother Charles Letter to Moses

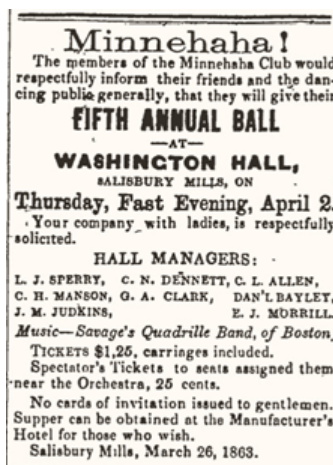
Postmarked: Amesbury, April 30. (Courtesy of Rob Gordon.)

Salisbury April [1863]

Dear Brother

I have not recieved any letter from you for some time not since you went to Port Hudson Wee hear it very sickly at Baton Rouge and I dont know but what you are sick if you be let me know I am very anxious to hear from you But I hope you are well. How is Dr Hyrd [Hurd] I heard he was very sick. I am well and keep busy to work I have not much news to write at present I bleeve I have not writen sense wee had the Minne Ball² Wee had a good time and a good company wee done Better this year than ever before everything passed off well with the exception of a slight row in the entry, there was

² What seems like a macabre wordplay on the bullet known as the “minie ball,” actually refers to the Minnehaha Club, a social and charitable group of young men, of which Charles was president.



Announcement
for the annual
ball of the
Minnehaha Club,
1863.

some considerable rum drank as usual, but on the whole it was a quiet time The Salisbury Manufacturing have bought out the Cotton Mill and intend to make great improvements, They will run a railroad track from the depot up into the upper yard so they can cary their goods into their storeroom they are goin to sell all the wooden buildings at auction. the new mill is most ready to run in a few weeks more every thing wall be in operation. The Catholics have bought the house and land oposite the episcopalle Church and are goin to build a church right away by the time you come home things will be Changed some, This town needs improveing some Alf [Alfred Dennett, their brother] is at Washington to work on the fortificasion he has been there a month and likes first rate I had a letter from Sew [Sewell Dennett, another brother] the other day. he is well but has got tired of a Soldiers life as I supose most of then have. wee do not hear any more of the draft, but I supose it will come soon enough Baily Osgood has ben married two months and has got a son and heir he is smart there is a good many smart foleles [fellows] in Amesbury this year they have alterd the time on the railroad the Cars Come in at two O Clock in the afternoon. Mrs Wilson, Ad[a]line True, is very sick they don't think she will live I saw Jo Hoyt Last night she sends her love to you and wants you to look out and not get sick She is fat as a hog at surt [it's hurt] her to have her man at war, Next Thursday [30 April 1963] is National Fast. Ther is to be a Clam Bake at salisbury Beach the Boys are all goin down. Dearen Sargent has left the mill Charly Scofield has taken his place Jim Dennett is Boss of the wool shop Wee have had some nice weather Lately Warm and pleasant spring has Come at last and I am glad of it cold weather dont suit me Carlo [Moses' dog] is well and sends his Bark and wag he is fat and Laisy he stais out to the shop with me all the time Lais under the Bench he is setting up in the chair By the side of me while I write winking his eye and trying to keep awake, This morning I went up on Po Hill Should you not like to see old powow once more. I have got a large sheet of paper but I cant think of enough to fill it up I want you to write as often as you can Give my respects to the boys. And take good care of yourself

from your Brother C N Dennett

Last Day PS I have just received your Letter I Am glad to hear you are well But They say here you will not Come home untill August Adline Wilson died Last night³ I read Loise[?] letter I was up there this morning.

Norman [Charles' middle name]

³ Mary Adaline Wilson died April 29, 1863.

Appendix E: Letter to Moses from His Aunt Susie Herbert Thom

Courtesy of Rob Gordon.

Vincentown [NJ] May 24th [1863]

My dear nephew,

We received your very welcome letter last evening, and I can assure you we felt much pleased to here[sic] from you. I had feared it was directed wrong, and would not reach you. Alfred [Moses' brother] gave me the direction when he was here. I was very sorry to learn that you have been sick, though I am not surprised considering the exposure. Do you, or rather are you obliged to expose yourself to the hot sun? I have understood that exposure to the sun, the evening air, together with the bad water are the causes of many of the fevers of that hot climate. It is rather a sickly climate though last summer it was remarkably healthy, and I hope will be this. I hope when this letter reaches you it will find you strong and well. I think it must be very hard to be sick there, bad enough if you are well. If you only get away and get up north where you can once more enjoy the cool breezes I shall be exceedingly thankful. We are all very anxious for you to come and spend some time with us on your return, when you arrive at Philadelphia you will be only about twenty miles from here, and you can come in the cars all but two miles and the Vincentown stage meets the line. The road is to be extended here but will not be completed until December. We are all very anxious to see you, and if you cannot be released so as to come then, you can come back and make us a visit. The two Alfreds came in a propeller⁴ sailed out of Boston and came to Philadelphia for \$8 and boarded. Alfred D[ennett] went from here to Washington and the last I heard from him he was at Arlington Heights not as a soldier, but carpenter.⁵ I am surprised that he has not written you, I have been expecting he would stop when he came back, but have almost given him up, yet I do not know that he has left there, think perhaps he has not. I intended when he came back to get Sewells directions and write him Will you please give me them so that I can write him. I have thought much about you both, as you are exposed to such hot climates Does Sewell seem satisfied. Oh, how I do wish this war was ended. Moses I reckon by this time you have seen some of the horrors of war. I think you have had a large share of marching to do. I wonder how you ever stood it. You must have been more than tired. There seems to be no chance for one to favor themselves in the army. Uncle John [brother of Moses' mother, Sally Herbert] lives here I suppose you know he is married again, he was married last Oct. and is keeping house, he has a select school here which is very good. He is nicely fixed here. Sends his love. We all send a great deal. Annie [Susie's daughter] goes to school to Uncle John I am

⁴ That is, a ship with a screw propeller.

⁵ Alfred Dennett did enlist as a soldier in August, 1864.

intending next week to get some photographs taken and I will send you one — Write if you can when you receive this. Write soon. Your Ever affectionate Aunt, Susie H. Thom [sister of Sally Herbert]

Direct as before

Vincentown
Burlington Co.
New Jersey

I do not see how you ever managed to get along without money so long if I had known it I would have sent you some. Once more, Good bye

Do you get the Villager from Salisbury, they are making great improvements there, in the way of building

Mr. Thom and Annie send much love to you

Sources

Family Sources

There are some remarkable family sources for this paper:

Bixby, Sally Howe Gordon, school-girl paper, “Autobiography of a Grandfather,” written from Moses’ point of view. Because Moses says he is “nearing my eighty-fifth birthday,” Sally likely wrote this in the first half of 1925 as a twelve year-old, seventh grader. This essay should be given a lot of weight because in the Jon Howe source she says: “I wrote a paper about what my grandfather had done. And he dictated it to me . . . Then he told me about the days in the Civil War that he could remember” (p. 23).

Dennett, Helen, diaries from 1862-63. Helen is Moses’ first cousin. Courtesy of Ruth Stearns.

Howe, John II, “Howe Family History” (1989), contains unique anecdotes about various periods in Moses’ and Jennie’s lives.

Howe, Jon, transcription of family reminiscences at a family beach rental (date unknown), called "Owed to Dennett: The Life Story of Dennett Farwell Howe and the Howe Family: Part One, 1909 through the early 1950's" (2007), with the intentional pun on "Ode" to his father Dennett Howe. Much of Part One deals with the lives of Moses Dennett and Jennie Eastman.

Kendall, Tim, preface to the self-published facsimile of an 1880's Moses Dennett carriage catalogue. The preface provides an account of Moses' life based heavily on the Howe and Plummer sources, as well as a listing of Moses' descendants. It is a precursor to this paper.

Other Sources

Creasy, George William, *The City of Newburyport In the Civil War From 1861 to 1865: With the Individual Records of the Soldiers And Sailors Who Served to Its Credit*, Boston: Griffith-Stillings Press, 1903. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ucw.ark:/13960/t6pz59t34&view=2up&seq=6>

Massachusetts Adjutant General's Office, War Records, Room 1000, 100 Cambridge Street, Boston. Certification of Moses' war service. Massachusetts did not issue Civil War pensions.

National Archives, Military Service Records (NNCC), Washington D.C. Moses' pension and military records. Source of all of the pension affidavits referenced.

Plummer, Albert, *History of the Forty-eighth Massachusetts Regiment M.V.M During the Civil War*, Boston, New England Druggist Publishing Company, 1907. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t6154tf2q&view=2up&seq=40>. Provides a detailed day-by-day account of the regiment's 9-month campaign and a vivid picture of the soldiering that his regiment did.