



Nebraska History posts materials online for your personal use. Please remember that the contents of *Nebraska History* are copyrighted by the Nebraska State Historical Society (except for materials credited to other institutions). The NSHS retains its copyrights even to materials it posts on the web.

For permission to re-use materials or for photo ordering information, please see:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/magazine/permission.htm>

Nebraska State Historical Society members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* and four issues of *Nebraska History News* annually. For membership information, see:

<http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/members/index.htm>

Article Title: Editor's Showcase: A Love Letter from Pine Ridge

Full Citation: Richard E Jensen, ed., "Editor's Showcase: A Love Letter from Pine Ridge," *Nebraska History* 81 (2000): 47-48

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH2000ShowcasePRidge.pdf>

Date: 10/29/2012

Article Summary: Henry Daum wrote to his sweetheart at Fort Robinson in 1890 while he was serving with the Eighth US Infantry at Pine Ridge Agency. He warned her not to believe what she might read in the papers about the Wounded Knee Massacre.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Henry Daum, Mary Baumbgard, Big Foot, Captain Augustus W Corliss

Place Names: Pine Ridge Agency, South Dakota; Fort Robinson, Nebraska; Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota

Keywords: Henry Daum, Mary Baumbgard, Lakota Indians, Ghost Dancers, Minneconjous, Seventh US Cavalry, Eighth US Infantry

Photographs / Images: Company C of the Eighth US Infantry at Pine Ridge Agency, 1890

A Love Letter from Pine Ridge

Edited by Richard E. Jensen

Henry Daum wrote the following poignant letter to his sweetheart, Mary Baumbgard, while he was serving with the Eighth U.S. Infantry at Pine Ridge Agency, South Dakota, in 1890-91.¹ The twenty-nine-year-old Daum had been in the army since 1883. He met Mary in the summer of 1890 when he was stationed at Fort Robinson, Nebraska. She was a cook employed by Capt. Augustus W. Corliss, who commanded the Eighth Infantry.²

On November 19, 1890, Daum's Company C of the Eighth Infantry was ordered to the Pine Ridge Agency, South Dakota.³ The move was part of a massive influx of troops to the South Dakota reservation in response to rumors of an "outbreak" by the Lakota or Sioux, some of whom had begun experimenting with

Richard E. Jensen is senior research anthropologist at the Nebraska State Historical Society.

the new Ghost Dance religion. While Daum and his fellow soldiers languished in their temporary quarters at Pine Ridge Agency, other troops captured, and then attempted to disarm, Big Foot's band of Minneconjous at Wounded Knee Creek. On the morning of December 29 the soldiers at Pine Ridge could hear cannon fire to the east. An accidental gunshot had sparked a outbreak of fighting at Wounded Knee between about a hundred Lakotas and more than four hundred soldiers of the Seventh U.S. Cavalry. In a matter of minutes the conflict escalated into a massacre as men, women, and children of Big Foot's band were hunted down and killed.

A severe blizzard on December 31 ended hostilities. Peace negotiations soon resumed and the last of the Ghost Dancers surrendered to army control on January 15. Daum and his fellow soldiers returned to Fort Robinson in late January 1891. Henry and Mary were married on November 16, 1891.⁴

The Letter (*some punctuation has been added by the editor*).

Pine Ridge Agency
November 25th 1890

Dear Mary your most kind and welcome letter of the 23rd was gladly received and I was ever so glad to hear from you both and also glad to hear that you are both well and for God sake don't let the people at the post or any where else scare you to death[.] [A]nd another thing Dear Mary dont go any thing on what you read in the papers especially the Omaha Bee[.]⁵ [W]hat they put in the paper is enough to scare the life out of almost anyone so believe me Dear Mary and dont get frightened at what you read in news papers for if there is any thing takes place here I will write to you at once and let you know so dont feel [page 2] uneasy. I will write to you often Dear Mary[.] [I]t is hard for me to tell you how long we will stay here for this afternoon 4 more companies and 1 troop of cavalry came in camp and the 6th Cav & 7th Cav & 17th Infy and 1 bat-



Company C of the Eighth U.S. Infantry at Pine Ridge Agency, 1890. One of these soldiers is probably Henry Daum, but he has not been identified. NSHS-RG2845:119-70

tery of Artillery are on the road here and I think after all them troops get here it will about scare the Indians and they will all surrender. "C" Co. is turned into an Artillery Company and we are using the big guns.⁶ Dear Mary don't deprive yourself of any fun because I am not there because if you do you may have to wait a long while before we will dance together again, but I hope we dont have to wait very long for I am very anxious to see you. I feel very sorry for you for you must be all broke up after what Maggie had [page 3] done but never mind.⁷ I will put every thing in place again when I sit in the Rocker with you which I hope will be very soon. Mary help me wish and it may come sooner[.] [A]sk[?] Maggie to wish also both of you pull as hard as you can on the rope. Dear Mary I am very sorry I cant be present at the Wedding but circumstances alters cases so I will have to miss it but never mind we will all have one of our own some day but that part I will leave for you to decide[.] [A]s I said in the forepart of my letter I may stay here 2 weeks and I may stay here 2 months and I may never return to Robinson again, when we get through here we may be stationed some where else[.] [I]n case we are Dear Mary I wish to ask you just one question and

that is if I never come back to [page 4] Robinson again and I am stationed some where else will you come to where I am stationed and still work for Captain Corliss.⁸ Dear Mary the reason I ask you this question is because (I love you with all my heart)[.] [P]lease answer this as soon as possible and let me hear your answer for I am as anxious [?] as a child is of its mother[.] [Y]ou may let Maggie read this if you wish for Maggie knows how I love you[.] Dear Mary do just as you please go to as many dances as you please. I hope you will enjoy yourself but here where I am I have no enjoyment what ever, it breaks my heart to be so far away from you. Good by love untill we meet again[.] [M]y regards to all and my Love to you from your true lover.

Henry Daum
Co. "C" 8th Infantry
Pine Ridge Agency S. D.

P. S. please answer at once and oblige,
yours forever H. D.

Dear Mary please tell Maggie that I am ever so much obliged to her for taking my place in the little Rocker [?] tell her I will return the compliments some day that is if these devils dont play funny work H.D.⁹

Notes

¹ Copies of Daum's letter and his military service record were a gift to the Nebraska State Historical Society from Rea Trotter of Windsor, Colorado. Her husband is Daum's great-grandson. Mary's name was rendered both Baumbgard and Bomgarden in the Augustus W. Corliss Diary, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

² Corliss hired Mary in May 1890. Corliss Diary.

³ Robert M. Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 114.

⁴ Corliss Diary.

⁵ *The Omaha Bee* was not the only paper guilty of exaggerating the danger faced by the military on Pine Ridge. Except for a short time immediately after the Wounded Knee Massacre, service at the agency was no more hazardous than at Fort Robinson.

⁶ Years later Captain Corliss recalled that they had three or four Hotchkiss cannon and a Gatling gun. Corliss interview, tablet 24, Eli S. Ricker Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society.

⁷ Captain Corliss had hired Maggie Jacobs as a housegirl. Corliss Diary.

⁸ Daum's company returned to Fort Robinson, where he was discharged on November 26, 1893, at the expiration of his enlistment. He reenlisted December 7, and was assigned to the Second U.S. Infantry. At the time, the Daums had one child. Daum service record. Augustus Corliss served as Fort Robinson's commanding officer during much of the next three years. Thomas R. Buecker, *Fort Robinson and the American West, 1874-1899* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1999), 199-200.

⁹ The last paragraph was written upside down on the top of p. 4.