

# Hannah Horton Gray Letter



This letter was written by Hannah Horton Gray, wife of Alexander Gray, to her children. The family left Searcy County because of the bitter feeling between Union and Rebel sympathizers and traveled to Mattoon, Illinois. This is an account of the trip after arriving in Mattoon.

Dear Children,

On the 10th of July, we left Little Rock to go on north and arrived at Duvall's Bluff, where on the 14th day of the same month, Benjamin, your little girl Susan Franklin died and was buried the following day. And Thomas, your dear little sister Rebecca died on the 16th and was buried the 17th. And on the same day your uncle's child Frances C. died, but the boats left and we buried her on the 19th at the mouth of the White River.

Then several days' boat ride, about the 24th of July, we arrived in Mattoon, Illinois all sick but Poke. My trouble then began to increase greatly and on the 6th of August in the evening your dear father died leaving us all alone in a strange land.

And Benjamin, the same night at 11:00, your little boy Samuel died and on the next day both were buried. And Samuel Parks, your little girl Martha died the 17th of August and on the 18th was buried beside your father and little Samuel. Your grandmother [Rebecca] is lying low now at the point of death. And Sarah and Betsy are very low.

Tomorrow morning, we will leave this place and go to a farm about 15 miles from here. I think we have found a good country here. I don't think it has ever been settled, there is plenty of everything here and many kind friends.

I want you, as soon as you can, to get a furlough and come up here to see us. We haven't been able to do a bit of work since we got here. I have found the kindest people here I ever met with. I don't lay our sickness to the country since we came but to the water on the boats and now when we go to the country we hope all will get well. We have had the diarrhea but your father must have had typhoid also.

Since I wrote this your Grandmother [Rebecca Austin Gray] died last night. Tell Jacob Shipman that his father and mother have both been sick and that his daughter is nothing but skin and bones. We are going to a place within one mile but I don't know the name of it. I will write you again from there. If any of our neighbors come out here tell

them to come the direct route from Cairo, Illinois to Mattoon, and when you write tell who all have left there, where they may have gone and if any of them have been killed by the Jayhawkers. Tell me, also, if your Uncle Warren is still with the Rebels and if he does get out, tell Sarah Ann to come here, for there's plenty of everything, for there is no want here, and very good friends.

Tell Wilson Gray, Aaron and Willie Gray that I have not forgotten them and I want them to write. Tell Mary that I should like to see her. And Samuel, little May is very weak yet, but they say she is getting better. Write soon if you can and direct to Mattoon, Coles County, Illinois.

Our love to all.

Your affectionate mother,  
Hannah H. Gray

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Contributed by Vena Gray Benton of Baxter Springs, Kansas, a descendant of Hannah Horton Gray.



Mattoon, Illinois

August 19, 1864

