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Barbara Butler Davis, ed. *Affectionately Yours: The Civil War Home-Front Letters of the Ovid Butler Family.* Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2004. xix + 211 pp. $27.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87195-175-5.

Reviewed by A. James Fuller (Department of History, University of Indianapolis)
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A Rare Collection of Civil War Letters

The continuing deluge of publications in Civil War studies has flooded the field. Simply keeping track of a narrow channel in the tidal wave of new books is a daunting task. Yet, one happy consequence of all of this activity has been the outpouring of edited volumes of primary sources. When the floodwaters begin to subside or at last find clear channels in which to flow, these published sources will serve as fertile soil for future research and pedagogy. To be sure, some of the interpretive studies will stand the test of time and the definitive works on various battles and leaders will see multiple editions. And not all of the primary materials will last beyond one printing. But their publication ensures their accessibility to a wider audience and the many diaries and collections of correspondence provide multiple windows on a world that remains elusive despite so much scholarly attention.

This particular edition of Civil War letters is a rare and important contribution to the literature. In *Affectionately Yours: The Civil War Home-Front Letters of the Ovid Butler Family*, Barbara Butler Davis, a Spanish teacher and great-great-granddaughter of Ovid Butler, offers the reader an unusual view of the great conflict that divided and redefined the nation. Instead of letters written *by* a soldier on campaign, this book contains a series of letters written by his family *to* a soldier away at war. While there were thousands upon thousands of such epistles written during the Civil War, most did not survive the conflict. Even officers found it difficult to carry a collection of letters from home along with them on the march from battlefield to battlefield. When soldiers did manage to carry them, the letters themselves were often worn out from constant rereading. But young Scot Butler kept his family's letters safe and sound throughout the war and brought them back to Indiana when the conflict was over.

Scot Butler was the son of Ovid Butler, a prominent Indianapolis attorney and educator. A staunch Republican and abolitionist, Ovid Butler wrote the original charter for the Northwest Christian University, a church-related college that eventually became Butler University. A leader of the Christian (Disciples of Christ) church, Ovid Butler expressed his devotion to God in both his public and private affairs. This led him to action as a social and political reformer as well as a religious leader. His reputation for radical reform was earned by his support for education for women and African Americans at the college. He also broke with other church leaders in his condemnation of slavery, prominently opposing the peculiar institution throughout his career.

Scot Butler did not share all of his father's beliefs. While his father was convinced that slavery was a sin and that slaveholders broke harmony with the family of God when they owned other human beings, the young man felt no burning desire to serve the abolitionist cause. Barbara Butler Davis speculates that perhaps Scot Butler was too young or too immature to hold such convictions, but there were other possibilities as well. Perhaps not adhering to all of his father's views was a form of youthful rebellion for a young man whose father had planned his entire future. Ovid Butler was grooming his son to take up his own mantle, especially in regard to the school he had founded in 1855. To be sure, Scot accepted his father's guidance, and eventually he would dutifully fill the role the patriarch of the family set for him. But perhaps not fully supporting the abolitionist principles that so motivated his father was a means of pushing the boundaries of parental authority to establish some sense of youthful independence.

Instead, the eighteen-year-old from Indianapolis enlisted in the Union Army out of a sense of patriotism and duty. He loved his country and was willing to serve it in order to save the nation from the danger of secession. Caught up in the excitement of the nationalistic fervor that marked the early days of the war, Scot Butler left behind the comforts of home and his father's clearly defined

plans for his future. He joined the Army and was mustered into the 33rd Indiana Volunteer Infantry regiment. He served in the Signal Corps, a role that afforded him an unusual perspective on the various battles and campaigns in which he was involved, including Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, Franklin, and the campaigns to take Chattanooga and Nashville, as well as Sherman's "March to the Sea."

The book consists of transcriptions of and appropriate notes for sixty-five family letters. Scot Butler wrote the first entry in the volume, a letter to the young lady who would become his wife after the war. But the rest were from the family. Here we find the anxiety and the encouragement shared by loved ones when a serviceman is away at the front. Words of comfort share space with the news of the day and little anecdotes about family life. The reader is brought into the world of the Northern middle class, as the parents worry about the young man's character and hope that he will escape moral ruin as well as physical danger. The letters relate the father's support of prominent Republicans, such as Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton, and his thoughts on a wide variety of subjects. In this, as in most wars, those on the home front sometimes had a clearer understanding of the conflict as a whole than the soldiers on the line. News of Morgan's Raid was interspersed with gender roles, while matters of faith and family government were mixed with the news of illness. Worries stood alongside funny stories as a family tried to keep a detached member within the bonds of kinship.

This is not a typical Civil War correspondence. Scot's letter revealed the boredom of camp life, but the book's contribution is not another recounting of life as a soldier in the Union Army. Instead, what makes this volume so important is the family's perspective, the stuff of ordinary life carried out in extraordinary times. It offers us a unique view of the Northern home front and an often-neglected side of war, the military families. In addition to taking us inside the minds and hearts of one Hoosier family in a particular period of time, *Affectionately Yours* also touches on universal themes that are as relevant to a country in the midst of the War on Terror as they were to a nation ripped apart by the Civil War.

The book is obviously a work of love, a natural consequence of conducting research on one's own family. But Barbara Butler Davis transcends her family connection with a superb job as editor. She includes useful prefatory sections that introduce the family and describe the state of Indiana. Her notes amplify and explain the context of each subject, while the postscript and appendix carry the family history beyond the war years. The result of her labor is a fine collection that is of interest to scholars and students of the Civil War as well as those who study Indiana society and culture. It also appeals to general readers who will find it enjoyable as well as easily readable.

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