

## A 155-Year-OLD LETTER

By Gideon H. Bransford

### Editor's Note:

This 155-year-old letter has not been altered in spelling or punctuation for publication. The Rev. Gideon H. Bransford wrote it on May 17, 1848. The letter's writer was a Methodist circuit-rider, beginning in the early 1840s in the Kentucky-Tennessee state-line area that includes the Mount Zion community east of Union City, Tennessee.

Born on August 9, 1805, in Smith County, Tennessee, Bransford became one of the founders and the first pastor of Mount Zion Methodist Church and other Kentucky-Tennessee congregations whose churches continue into a third century. On December 26, 1826, he married Mary Wooten in Smith County, where she was born on June 17, 1808.

This couple were the great-grandparents of John A. Bell of Union City who lent this early letter to the *Journal*. He and his wife Jean Parker Bell have long been active in West Tennessee historical study and preservation as members of the Obion County Historical Society he has served as president.

Here are facsimiles of both the letter written by Mr. Bell's great-grandfather from "Itinerant Retreat Obion Cty May 17, 1848" and the letter's envelope posted on no given date from "Tottens Wells" Tennessee, to "Mr. Arthur M. Bransford Dixon Springs Smith County, Tenn.." We learn this first-cousin of the Rev. Gideon Bransford owed the writer more than one reply to letters posted earlier to Smith County.

The writer lived until August 28, 1868. His wife survived until July, 1870. They are both buried in the Mount Zion Methodist Churchyard.

Ytters Office B  
Dear  
Mr Arthur M. Bransford  
Dixons Springs  
Smith County  
Tenn

Answered 21<sup>st</sup> June 1848  
By R.M.B.

State of Ten Obion County

Dear Cousin Arthur

after long absence  
I take this opportunity to send you a few lines  
to stir up your pious mind by way of remembrance  
I have nothing of importance to write but from the  
long intimacy between us I cannot neglect you as  
you do me Through the Mercy of God we are all  
alive and are tolerable well for which we feel thank-  
ful hoping these lines will find your Cousin Polly in  
the enjoyment of the blessings of life and health and  
exulting in prospect of a glorious immortality beyond  
the Grave of the times and seasons you need not that  
I write unto you the health of our Country is tolerable  
though there is some sickness and deaths there there  
is an abundance of Every thing in the way of produce  
except wheat but that will soon be ripe also looks  
fine Corn is plenty at one Dollar per Barrel lots  
of bacon and very cheap Money is exceeding scarce  
and I shall not now say what I think is the cause  
There is a Bro Brown here from Buckingham City Virginia  
he got a letter a few days since in which were compli-  
ments to me from Elizabeth A. Price your sister she  
wants to hear where you are very much Bro Brown  
thinks she needs help and if you would be willing  
for her to come to your house her friends would  
furnish the means for her to come though she did  
not intimate in her letter if you wish to write  
Direct your letter to Gravel, Still Buckingham City  
Virginia I have a good circuit we have but one  
Preacher and the folks say that Garrett counts one  
we have good meetings and good many join the chur-  
ch In my darlin went with me to Missouri a few  
days ago the good folks there loaded her with presen-  
ts They are offering great inducements for us to  
move there but I dont know yet I am pleased

Our friends <sup>will</sup> here are all wesleys but ~~swamed~~ the  
other night and it is a fine son Daniel Glenn  
is a clever man and is Circuit Steward  
Give my respects to Cousin Benj<sup>n</sup> and Patsy Towns  
and William and Mary and Cousin Nancy and her  
folks. Susan and hers and all your children  
without distinction;  
Tell Bro Richard and Patsy <sup>howdy</sup> once more and I would be  
glad to see his little Eye Down here in some of  
our Good Class Meetings I have condescended to write  
to number of you up there and not a letter have  
I got for three months I am done if I can leave  
my circuit and nothing happens I want to come up  
this fall but I dont know how it will be yet like  
There is a certain Bro L. H. Gage that I want to  
sit down and talk with a bout two Days and nights  
You must write and let me know about your class  
and how you are getting along I expect you have  
heard that wesleys Lizzy died that Cold Sunday  
And her little Boy Green some weeks after Lizzy died  
Happy after being afflicted a long time Give my respects  
to Parson Burns and family and to enquiring friends  
and now in conclusion I may never see you again  
in this world permit me to say that I still love  
Jesus and feel as much as ever resolved to serve him  
on Earth that I may live with him in Heaven  
and if we never meet again on Earth I hope  
we will meet to part no more so fare well

Arthur M. Bransford

Gideon H. Bransford  
Stinevant Retreat Union City  
May 17<sup>th</sup> 1848

## State of Ten Obion County

Dear Cousin Arthur

After long absence I take this opportunity to Send You a few lines To stir up Your pure mind by way of remembrance. I have nothing of importance to write but from the long intamacy between us I cannot neglect You as You do me. Through the Mercy of God we are all alive and are tolerable well for which we feel thankful hoping these lines will find You & Cousin Polly in The enjoyment of the blessings of life and health and Exulting in prospect of a Glorious immortality beyond The Grave of the times and Seasons You need not that I write unto You the health of our Country is tolerable. Though there is Some Sickness and Deaths here there is an abundance of Every thing in the way of produce Except wheat but that will Soon be ripe and looks fine Corn is plenty at one Dollar per Barrel lots of bacon and Verry cheap Money is exceeding Scarce and I Shall not now Say what I think is the cause There is a Bro Brown here from Buckingham City, Virgin he got a letter a few days Since in which were compliments to me from Elizabeth A. Price Your Sister She wants to hear where You are Verry much Bro Brown Thinks She needs help and if You would be willing for her to come to Your House her friends would furnish the means for her to Come though She did not intimatict in her letter: if You wish to write Direct Your letter to Gravel Hill Buckingham City, Virginia I have a Good circuit we have but one Preacher and the folks Say that Garrett counts one we have good meetings and good many Join the church My darlin went with me to Missouri a few Days ago the Good folks there loaded her with presents they are offering as Great inducements for us to Moove there but I dont know Yet I am placed

here Our friends here are well Wesley's been borned the other night and it is a fine Son Daniel Glenn is a Clever man and is Circuit Steward Give my respects to Cousin Benj m and Patsey Towns and William and Mary and Cousin Nancy and her folks. Suisan and hers and all Your Children without distinction.

Tell Bro Richard and Betsy howdy once more and I would be Glad to See his little Eye Down here in Some of our Good Class Meetings I have condesended to write to number of you up there and not a letter have I got for three months I am done if I can leave my circuit and nothing hapens I want to come up This fall but I dont Know how it will be Yet There is a certain Rev L..H. Cage that I would like to Sit down and talk with a bout two Days and nights You must write and let me know about Your Class and how You are geting a long I expect You have heard that Wesleys Lizzy Died that cold Sunday And her little Boy Green Some weeks after Liz Died Happy after being afflicted a long time Give my respects To Parson Burns and family and to enquiring friends and now in conclusion I may never See You again in this world permit me To Say that I Still love Jesus and feel as much as ever resolved to Serve him on Earth that I may live with him in Heaven and if we never meet again on Earth I hope we will meet to part no more So fare well

Arthur M. Bransford

Gideon H. Bransford

Itinerant retreat Obion Cty

May 17th 1848