

Introduction

DID YOU KNOW THAT FICTION writer John Jakes, who penned the wildly popular *North and South* fiction trilogy in the 1980s, was partly responsible for the eventual publication of *The Bachelor Papers*?

I am asked two questions regarding the *Papers*. One, “How in the world did you get started on all this?” And two, “How long did it take?” The second question is easy: seven years. The first question is a bit more complicated.

I have always loved history, especially historical novels, so I usually check the bibliographies of the books I read. In the back of one bestselling author John Jakes’s Civil War novels was a mention of the “Bachelor Papers” at the New Hampshire Historical Society in Concord. That piqued my interest.

I called the society and asked whether I could view the papers and was delighted when the person on the other end told me yes. The next weekend, my husband Dave and I set off for Concord, about an hour away. The librarian brought out two acid-free boxes of handwritten letters and announced there were a lot more “if you need them.” Dave was like a kid in a candy store as he pulled out one letter after another. Every few minutes he would say, “Look at this!” or “Audrey, read this!” The content was riveting, and many of the authors were men we had read about. We spent the entire day there, sifting through scores of letters.

“Have these letters been printed?” Dave asked the librarian.

He shook his head and replied, “No, but are on microfilm and about five sets of those have been printed. You can order a set on microfilm if you like.”

David and I smiled at one another. “Yes, we would like that very much,” I announced.

Dave’s birthday was coming up, so I bought him a microfilm viewer. He was going to read them during the evenings, but that’s hard to do after a full day at work. Instead, I offered to read them during the day and type them out for him.

This worked fine but it was a lot of work. One evening, we agreed it was a shame for me to spend all those hours transcribing the letters just so he could more easily read them. The content was magnificent and obviously of tremendous historical value. Could we get them published? We decided to try.

I called several university publishers, but every one of them wanted only the cream of the letters or parts thereof and was willing to cast away everything else. That made no sense to us, and I was determined that the transcriptions should be exact and complete.

One day I spotted an ad in *Gettysburg Magazine* for Morningside House, and I called. Bob Younger was very interested, knew about Bachelder, and told me he had always wanted to publish them. He agreed to no deep editing—he would print them just the way the veterans had written them, misspelled words and all.

With that news in hand, I met with the historical society's board and told them about the offer. The board agreed to let us publish them. We were on the way. If I had realized then the amount of work and time I would have to put forth, I wonder if I would have had the courage to tackle it. I tend not to see the big picture on many of my projects and simply plow ahead, dealing with the part directly in front of me that needs to be handled.

And thus it began in earnest. I transcribed pages during the day, and Dave would take them to work (he traveled quite a bit back in those days) to edit them. He had a fine library including regimental histories and a full set of the original *Official Records*. Bob Younger sent us a set of books on Union officers, and we bought books on Confederate Officers. All in all, we had quite a bit of research material on hand. We were able to identify every letter correspondent except for one (the art professor at West Point). We did make one mistake I know of. There were two brothers in the same company (as I recall at this late date, they were named Richard and Robert) and both were mentioned as just "R." I identified the wrong one.

We had a few hard cases to solve. One line in a letter read like this: "I stationed ----- at Devil's Den." The two words we could not decipher looked something like "Anopheles Simms." We went back to that line repeatedly for about six months and then one evening, as we were both looking at it, the two words morphed from "Anopheles Simms" into

“Napoleon Guns.” That was it! In another instance, we could not make out a phrase until a friend saw it and told us it was in French! Mostly I just struggled through the various old handwriting and it came together over time.

The Bachelder collection also included seven large maps. Dave put a grid on them to make them easier to use and used footnotes that corresponded with the grid positions on the maps.

Bob told me I needed to use a business grade laser printer, so I bought one. We also upgraded our software and eventually had to get a better and faster new computer.

When we had enough for the first volume, I sent off the draft pages to Bob, who asked Dr. Richard A. Sauer to write a Foreword. Waiting for your first book to arrive was like waiting for your first baby. What a wonderful feeling it was to finally get the cartons, tear one open, and hold the book in your own hands. Volumes 2 and 3 followed. The *Papers* were now complete.

But there was also something else in the society holdings: Bachelder’s manuscript on Gettysburg. We decided to tackle that, too.

This manuscript was a different proposition entirely. JB had put it together himself and had even typeset some pages before the government pulled the plug on the deal. JB had used many official reports and letters in his history, which made good sense, but the government was now printing the *Official Records* and, in a short-sighted decision, saw no need for his history. That was that, and Bachelder’s work was put aside and forgotten—a large manuscript that would collect dust and garner almost no attention for nearly a century. The Historical Society graciously allowed me to bring home a stack of his manuscript pages, transcribe them, and then take them back and exchange them for another set.

This was harder than using the microfilm! Although the letters on film were photographed and transcribed in a somewhat chronological order, JB’s *History* is set forth chronologically but includes the actions of both sides in the same time frame. It was all quite a challenge. By the time I finished, I had more than 2,000 pages. No one was going to publish something that long, so we began the tedious editing process. This included identifying and cutting duplicate reports and surplus items, such as lists of men who received

awards, and so forth. By the time I finished, the manuscript had been cut down to about 850 pages.

Bob later told me he had not expected the widespread positive response he received from customers on these books. He knew he was printing for a niche market and he wanted to publish them before something happened to prevent it. He published his books in fairly small quantities, but he promised us that he would never let them go out of print. Bob was a man of his word, but no one could have predicted the significant changes that would wash over all of us with the advent of the Internet, including the ill-effect it had on small publishing companies like Morningside. Bob died in 2006, the company was sold, and it dissolved a short time later. And that was the end of that—until it wasn't.

I am so grateful to Theodore P. Savas and his company Savas Beatie for republishing *The Bachelder Papers*, and now *John Bachelder's History of the Battle of Gettysburg*. I am also grateful to Mark Wade for encouraging Ted and staying on him until the ball got rolling! And I thank Eric J. Wittenberg for his new Forewords in both the *Papers* and in this book.

Dave would be so proud and happy to see these books being made more widely available again at a reasonable cost. He just wanted them to be shared and enjoyed.

I hope everyone enjoys both titles as much as I do.

Audrey Ladd
North Andover, Massachusetts
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