

Wilton County So., }  
April 16<sup>th</sup> 1861

Dear Brother & Sister, I have

you want to hear from us all, and finding that the rest of my brother & sister here are negligent in writing to you therefore I will give you a few scribbles, this is a cold cloudy damp day, rained all night, which makes two weeks of wet weather, with only two or three fair days during the time, we have had the worst spell of weather I ever saw for the time of year, we are very backward & it seems as if we shall never get our crops pitched, the corn is not all planted, & no cotton our corn crops in this section, & even in this State will be very large this year, & the cotton crops one third lighter than usual, the wheat & oat crop is larger than usual, and if the seasons favor our crops <sup>next year</sup> there will be an abundance of grain made this year, which will be a great blessing, the old stock of provisions is plentiful & cheaper than we anticipated last fall, some will be smartly pinched, but as a general thing there will be plenty, Corn 70 cts wheat \$1.60 Bacon 12 1/4 @ 15, flour. 4. c. b. & soy on, our present wheat crops are very promising indeed, & if nothing happens to it, there will be more wheat harvested this year, than ever was of one year before, I have 20 acres sowed in wheat, & looks well, I am trying to work in the farm this year, but my constitution, and health is too feeble to be of much service in the farm, I have no hiring this year, therefore the blunt & burden of labor falls heavily on William, my new ground 25 acres, and the patches will be our crop, & if this cold wet weather does not continue too long, I think we can manage our crop, we have it all planted & the corn is coming up, & William has commenced breaking out the bales I have sold \$85.00 worth from my last years corn crop, & can sell some \$40, or \$50.00 worth more, and still have plenty to do us, altho my crop was not as good as anticipated,

I now change my subject, the health of the neighborhood is generally good, but little sickness at present, the Connecticut generally well, our father & mother's health pretty much as usual, you heard (probably) that Mother came very near dying some two or three months back, she had a severe spell; & was very low indeed, she was near two weeks, that she could not help herself it took two & sometimes three to wait on her for she had to be raised in the bed, then it took two to get her off of the bed to her chair, and the same help to get her from the chair to her bed again, and this had to be performed about every hour day and night, for she could rest in no one position long at a time, her greatest misery was in her loins, hip and back, with a tremendous cough, but she has got better and is now able to get about the house, and I believe has went into the garden, she is not stout nor never will be again, I was there yesterday, she was complaining of her cough, her polypus has left her nose, father's health is tolerable good, but in body very much paralysed, Can hardly get about, stiff in his joints, with rhumatic pains, Aunt Rachel has ben left there two months, Mother could not bear her, & my girls has taken it turn about and staid with her six weeks, and now one of Emily's is staying with her, Elyas or has rented one of fathers fields & planted it in corn, one W<sup>th</sup> Annes has rented the other field to plant in corn, A. Gentry tends his patch A. D. S. about 22 Acres in wheat of his ground and Elyas sowed 8 acres and some in oats so you see that his land is in cultivation, now I change my subject again, if we have no more frost we will have fruit plenty, the trees will not be so full as last year, but probably larger, Hannah's family all well, had some bad luck, lost a cow a yearling, and a calf, also some of her hunk, & some pigs, I believe has died, Burrell's wife had a girl child, three weeks ago, his wife smart, but child in bad health at present, probably hives, William Rachel's wife had a daughter last Saturday night and I suppose is very feeble, Sister Alachala, also, had a daughter last week, and is tolerably smart, Elbert Bowers wife had twins some ten days ago both boys, doing well as far as I know, also an other of my neighbors, Mark M<sup>r</sup> Gernont's wife had twins the next night after Bowers, both boys, all doing well, —

I received a letter from Sister Hephzibah last Friday. It states in her letter that they are all well, and well satisfied with their new home & country. She also states in her letter that she has an other daughter 3 weeks old, which makes her five girls, & 3 boys, 8 children in all, & ten in family and William & Donald speaks highly of their home & country. Mrs. & Louisa also wrote a letter, and they are also well satisfied with their home & country. They all expect to come to see us next fall, or sooner, if you and them could come at the same time. you might get to see each other once more, but unless you hit on such a plan, in all probability, you never will meet and enjoy the pleasure of their company any more in this life. our connection & friends are scattered, and so of them we shall never meet nor see in this life. But what a great blessing it would be if we could meet them all in heaven where parting will be no more. Let our prayers to God be that we may all meet in heaven, where we may enjoy the smiles of Jesus, and be permitted to dwell with him for ever, and sing ceaseless anthems of praises to God and the Lamb for ever for Redeeming grace and dying love. Dear brother I often think of you, and sometimes I get to studying about father & mother, & how the family is scattered, and in what a helpless condition our parents is in, and who will take care of them, until I cannot hardly contain myself. I generally go to see father and mother two or three times a week, and find them sitting there in their chairs or on the bed as sleep, but thank God they always seem glad to see me, if I was to go every day. Dear brother if I always have the same feeling towards them I now have, I never want them to suffer for the lack of bodily comforts, or enjoyments, and when I see how much good it does them for me to visit them I shall continue to perform my duty toward them, & recall at the same time how careful they watched over me in my infancy, when I was helpless, and dependent.

April 19<sup>th</sup> three days later. - The weather was so cold when I wrote the first part of my letter I concluded to wait and see whether it would frost or not, but frost came not. Though we had two very cold nights. The wind blowing all the time, which prevented the frost. I was at fathers last night, they are as well as usual so is all the connection, father wants you to inferno us, concerning Gary Helton & Zach, where they are & how they are getting on with their lawsuit, & how you think it will terminate? - (a strange death, there was and old man 76 years old, & his third wife that started to Atlanta with a wagon. Some two weeks ago, they took up camp between the road & fathers house. The old man went to getting wood to make a fire, & the old woman went to fathers to grind some coffee, she returned to the wagon, and then went after a bucket of water, in the time of which the old man brought one turn of wood, & went for another, but came not back, by this time it was getting dark, the old woman became alarmed, at the absence of her husband, raised the alarm for the neighbors. They collected, search was made and the old man was found some twenty steps from the wagon dead, lying on his back with his hat on, without the least sign of a struggle. The old mans children was sent for (which lived not very far off.) They came, and was very much incensed at their step mother, said she had poisoned him, a coroners inquest was held, verdict under that he died by the <sup>hand</sup> of providence, but this did not satisfy the step children. They had him cut open, his stomach taken out & it sent to Atlanta, for to be analyzed, no body believes he was poisoned, Dear Brother, when you get this, be so good as, to write me an answer, write about every thing that would be of interest to us, Julia sends her respect to Viola, the children all sends love to you both, <sup>Mr</sup> Frank and Billy, so well their babe grows, finely can almost sit alone. They call its name Regina, I have no more room. Farewell,

L. & Julia Rainwater

To D. & F. & M. & P. Rainwater

*Letter of John Milton Rainwater to his brother David T. Rainwater*

Milton County, Georgia

April 16, 1861

Dear Brother & Sister,

I know you want to hear from us all, and finding that the rest of my brothers and sisters here are negligent in writing to you therefore I will give you a few scribbles. This is a cold cloudy damp day, rained all night, which makes it two weeks of wet weather, with only two or three fair days during the time we have had the wettest spell of weather I ever saw for the time of year. We are very backwards and it seems as if we shall never get our crops pitched. The corn is not all planted, & no cotton. Our corn crops in this section & even in this state will be very large this year & the cotton crops one third lighter than usual. The wheat & oat crop is larger than usual, and if the seasons favor our crops this year, there will be an abundance of grain made this

I now change my subject. The health of the neighborhood is generally good, but little sickness at present. The connection generally well. Our Father & Mother's<sup>1</sup> health is pretty much as usual, you heard (probably) that Mother came very near dying some two or three months back. She had a severe spell & was very low indeed. She was near two weeks, that she could not help herself. It took two & sometimes three to wait on her, for she had to be raised in the bed. Then it took two to get her off of the bed to get her to her chair, and the same help to get her from the chair to her bed again. And this had to be performed about every hour, day and night, for she could rest in no one position long at a time. Her greatest misery was in her loins, hip and back, with a tremendous cough, but she has got better and is now able to get about the house, and I believe she has went into the garden. She is not stout, nor never will be again. I was there yesterday. She was complaining of her cough. Her polyps has left her nose. Father's health is tolerable good, but in body very much paralyzed, can hardly get about, stiff in his joints with rheumatic pains. Aunt Rachel<sup>2</sup> has been left there two months. Mother could not bear her & my girls has taken it turn about and stayed with her six weeks, and now one of Emily's is staying with her.

Elza is or has rented one of father's fields & planted it in corn. One William Imes has rented the other field to plant in corn. A. D. Gentry<sup>3</sup> tends his patches. A.D.G. sowed 22 acres in wheat of his ground and Elza sowed 8

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1 Job & Didama Rainwater

2 Rachel Rainwater, Job's spinster sister

3 Azariah Denny Gentry, husband of Martha Lavinia Rainwater, the writer's sister

acres and some in oats. So you see that his land is in cultivation.

Now I change my subject again. If we have no more frost we will have fruit plenty. The trees will not be so full as last year, but probably larger. Hannah's<sup>4</sup> family all well, had some bad luck, lost a cow, a yearling, and a calf, also some of her lambs & some pigs has died. Burrell's wife had a girl child, three weeks ago. His wife smart but child in bad health at present, probably hives. William Hatchet's wife had a daughter last Saturday night and I suppose is very feeble. Sister Mahala<sup>5</sup> also had a daughter<sup>6</sup> last week and is tolerably smart. Elbert Bowens' wife had twins some ten days ago, both boys, doing well as far as I know. Also another of my neighbors, Mark MacDermont's wife had twins the next night after Bowens', both boys, all doing well.

I received a letter from sister Hepzibah<sup>7</sup> last Friday. She states in her letter that they are all well, and well satisfied with their new home & country. She also states in her letter that she has another daughter, three weeks old, which makes her five girls & three boys, eight children in all & ten in family her and William McDonald speaks highly of their home and country. Thomas & Louisa also wrote a letter, and they are also well satisfied with their home and country. They all expect to come to see us next fall or sooner. If you and them could come at the same time, you might get to see each other once more, but unless you hit on such a plan, in all probability, you never will meet and enjoy the pleasure of their company anymore in this life. Our connection & friends are scattered, and some of them we shall never meet nor see in this life. But what a great blessing it would be if we could meet them all in heaven where parting will be no more. Let our prayer to God be that we may all meet in heaven, where we may enjoy the smiles of Jesus and be permitted to dwell with him forever and sing ceaseless anthems of praise to God and the Lamb forever for redeeming grace and dying love.

Dear brother, I often think of you, and sometimes I get to studying Father & Mother & how the family is scattered, and in what a helpless condition our parents is in, and who will take care of them, until I cannot hardly contain myself. I generally go to see Father & Mother two or three times a week, and find them sitting there in their chairs or on the bed asleep, but thank God they always seem glad to see me. If I was to go every day, dear brother, if I always have the same feeling towards them I now have, I never want them to suffer for the lack of bodily comforts or enjoyments, and when I see how much good it does them for me to visit them, I shall continue to perform my duty toward them, recollecting at the same time how careful they watched over me in my infancy, when I was helpless and dependent.

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4 Hannah Smith Rainwater, widow of Levi Rainwater, the writer's brother. Hannah and Violet Smith Rainwater were sisters.

5 Mahala Rainwater Smith, wife of Hampton Smith. Mahala was one of the writer's sisters.

6 Based on the 1870 census, this is Mary A Smith

7 Hepzibah Rainwater McDonald, wife of William McDonald. Hepzibah was one of the writer's sisters.

April 19th three days later.

The weather was so cold when I wrote the first part of my letter. I concluded to wait and see whether it would frost or not, but frost came not, though we had two very cold nights, the wind blowing all the time, which prevented the frost. I was at Father's last night. They are as well as usual, so is all the connection. Father wants you to inform us concerning Gary Felton<sup>8</sup> & Zach, where they are & how they are getting on with their lawsuit, & how you think it will terminate.

(A strange death). There was an old man, 76 years old, & his third wife that started to Atlanta with a wagon some two weeks ago. They took up camp between the road and Father's house. The old man went to getting wood to make a fire and the old woman went to Father's to grind some coffee. She returned to the wagon, and then went after a bucket of water, in the time of which, the old man brought one turn of wood & went for another, but came not back. By this time it was getting dark, the old woman became alarmed at the absence of her husband, raised the alarm, sent for the neighbors. They collected, search was made, and the old man was found some 20 steps from the wagon dead, lying on his back with his hat on, without the least sign of a struggle. The old man's children was sent for (which lived not very far off). They came and was very much incensed at their step-mother. Said she had poisoned him. A coroner's inquest was held, verdict rendered that he died by the hand of Providence, but this did not satisfy the step-children. They had him cut open. His stomach taken out & it sent to Atlanta for to be analyzed. Nobody believes he was poisoned.

Dear Brother, when you get this be so good as to write me an answer. Write about everything that would be of interest to us. Julia<sup>9</sup> sends her respects to Violet, the children all sends howdy to you Brother. Frances and Billy is well.<sup>10</sup> Their babe grows finely. Can almost sit alone. They call its name Regina. I have no more room. Farewell.

John & Julia Rainwater

To: D T & Violet Rainwater<sup>11</sup>

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8 The Felton family was related on the writer's paternal grandmother's side – she was Ruth Felton Rainwater, wife of Solomon Rainwater.

9 Julia Rucker Rainwater, John's 1st wife

10 Frances Rainwater, the writer's daughter, and her husband William J. Crisler

11 David Tillotson Rainwater & Violet Hembree Rainwater, who still lived in South Carolina

*John Milton Rainwater wrote almost exclusively with commas. I have added punctuation and substituted modern spelling for a few words to clarify the meaning. Curiously the official date of the start of the Civil War is 12 Apr 1861, but John Rainwater, writing four days later, doesn't comment on it. Probably the news had not yet reached him.*

*The scan of the original was provided to me by Frank Rainwater. The original is held in the collection of South Caroliniana Library of the University of South Carolina.*

*Transcription and annotation by Susan Chance-Rainwater*

*#175*