Floyd County seems remote from the Civil War. The major military target in the mountainous southwestern quadrant of the old Dominion was the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad. It did not pass through Floyd.

A second reason exists for why the county is overlooked by Virginia historians of the 1860s. The vast majority of Floyd’s volunteers enlisted in five of the ten companies of the 54th Virginia Infantry Regiment. This unit had the distinction of never participating in a major engagement in its native state.

First duties for the 54th Virginia were in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky. Following brief garrison assignment in southeastern Virginia, the regiment became part of the Confederacy’s premier force in the Western theater: the Army of Tennessee. Battles at Chickamauga, Chattanooga,
Atlanta, and Nashville took a heavy toll from the ranks. So did desertion, which was a natural consequence of homesickness and continual defeats.

The Civil War was very real for the Hylton family of Floyd County. Prior to the American Revolution, Hyltons had settled in the area between the present-day towns of Floyd and Willis. Burwell Hylton (1801 – 1883) became not only one of the county’s largest landowners with over 300 acres; he and his wife, Mary Ann Slusher (1803 – 1888), also had one of the largest families: 14 children. Nine sons would serve in the Confederate army.

Lorenzo Dow Hylton was the fourth child. Born August 16, 1830, he followed family tradition by farming, but he also had a side-career as a music teacher. Hylton married Barbara Ellen Huff, two years his senior, in July, 1857. When civil war came, the couple had two children: Lutaro Mecalatha (1858 – 1930) and Bethany Elvira (1860 – 1939).

Barbara Hylton was in advanced pregnancy when Lorenzo Hylton became part of the second great wave of volunteers for the 54th Virginia. On March 24, 1862, he joined Company D while the regiment was encamped at Abingdon. Hylton was obviously trustworthy and dependable. On May 13 —

1. Testimony of Carolyn B. Coyle. The 1860 Floyd County Census listed Hylton as a “machinist,” which could have been a garbled spelling of “musician” or “musicianist.”
after but two months in service — he was elected second lieutenant of the company. He had family support as well: 24 Hyltons were in his regiment.

The wartime correspondence between husband and wife spans only two years, but it is unique. Preserved letters from men in the 54th Virginia are few. Even more rare in Civil War literature are letters to soldiers from wives. They either tended to be lost in the chaos of army life or else destroyed by addressees for the sake of privacy.

A further appeal of the Hylton letters is a human element. Lieutenant Hylton saw little excitement or glamor in the national struggle. He was more interested in when the war might end than in repulsing Northern invaders. The little events of family and home meant more to him than did military leaders and dramatic battles. In addition, Hylton's correspondence provides uninterrupted examples of the phonetic spelling characteristic of that era. The letters between the couple are printed here as written.

Mrs. Carolyn B. Coyle of Titusville, Fla., first alerted the editor to the Lorenzo Hylton letters. Her collection of Hylton papers is impressive, and her willingness to share part of this part of the collection is commendable. Barbara Hylton's letters are part of the Huff–Hylton Papers in Special Collections, Newman Library, Virginia Tech. Special thanks go also to Betty Ann Phillips Rice of Roanoke, Va. Another Hylton descendant, she was an excellent guide on this journey through the Hylton family trees.

The husband–wife correspondence begins here two months after the regiment arrived in Isle of Wight County to help man a defense line against Federals stationed in the Norfolk-Suffolk area.

Floyd Co., Va.
April 24, 1862

Dear Husband,

... I take my pen in hand to answer your kind letter of 16 April that I just read, which gave me great satisfaction to hear that you are well.

I can inform you that I have another Dauter.² It was born April 17th. Nathan Hylton³ went for a Doctor. [John D.] Stuart and [Callohill M.] Stigleman were neither of them at home and Howard⁴ was not able to

³. 1860 Floyd County Census. Thirty-year-old Nathan Hylton, a farmer with three small children, owned property adjacent to that of his brother, Lorenzo.
⁴. Jeffrey C. Weaver, 54th Virginia Infantry (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1993), 193. Dr. Thomas Henry Howard had been a hospital steward in the 54th Virginia prior to his January, 1863, discharge to return to civilian practice.
come. We then went after Mrs. Duncan\(^5\) and I am as well satisfied as if I had a Doctor. Send the name that you choose that it should be called.

Your Father and Brothers will do all they can to get our corn in. it will be a bad chance to get help from Samuel Weddle\(^6\) for another of his sons died the first of this week, and two more are sick. I want you to come home about harvest if you can.

Dear husband thou are kind and true
And every day I think of you
So my dear husband think of me
While many miles apart we be....

Dear Wife,

I take the present opportunity of droping you a few lines to let you know that I am well. Hoping these few lines come to hand they will find you all well. Hav nothing of particular intrest to write to you at present more than we hav had one little skirmish with the Yankees near Suffolk. It was nothing but a picket fight. We have but two Companys ingage in the fight, Capt. Dobyns and Capt. Edons.\(^7\)

We was kep back as reserve. The fight lasted 2 hours and a half. Thare was none hurt on our side. On the Yankees side was some 4 or 5 wounded and we taken one prisoner which was wounded in the leg and in the thigh and in arm. He was wounded so bad in the leg that it had to be taken off.

We ar station on Black Watter River in the County of Isles of Wight near a little town\(^8\) which lies in the County of Southamton on the other side of the River on the Rail Rode that leeds from Norfolk to Weldon, N.C. to gard the Rode that leeds to Petersburg and to Welden, North

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5. 1860 Floyd County Census. This was probably Anna Duncan, then in her mid-sixties. Her husband John had a farm close to the Hylton home.

6. 1860 Floyd County Census. A farmer of limited means, Samuel Weddle in 1860 had seven children. The four sons were Caleb (who served briefly in the 54th Virginia Infantry), Johnson, Malachi, and Eli.

7. Thomas P. Dobyns commanded Company A from Floyd County, while William F. Eaton led Pulaski County's Company F.

8. Hylton's regiment was stationed at Franklin, the seat of Southampton County.
Carolina. These two Rodes has to be garded. Thare is but a small force at Suffolk at present. Of the Yankees only a bout 25 hundred while we hav a bout 35 hundred.

I say to you that we ar doing fine here. At present we can git as many Sweet potatoes as we can eat and eggs at 50 Cts. per doz, Sweet potatoes at $1.50 per bushel and plenty of Pork, Beef, flour and most any thing in the way of eating....

February the 4th 1863

Dear Wife,

... I am well and hav had my helth better since I left Wytheville than I did before ...

We have had another battle whithe the Yankees, our company was not ingage in the fight.—None but Capt Dobyns and Capt Edens Company was ingage in the fight. Capt Dobyns was killed and Josiah Burnett of his company was wounded. Two of Capt Edens Company was wounded. Brother Henderson was taken prisoner. I have not herd from his since he was taken. Lieutenant John Lacy was kild of Capt [Jeremiah] Spences Company. three of his privates ar missing. Some two or three

9. The Petersburg Railroad, the oldest line in the state, ran north-south from Petersburg to Weldon, N.C. A second line, the Seaboard & Roanoke, extended southwesterly from Portsmouth to a junction with the Petersburg railroad just north of Weldon. The North Carolina town was 10 miles from the state line.


12. CSR, Roll 954. Josiah B. Burnett, also of Company A, was a farm laborer in the Indian Valley section of Floyd County. He survived his wound and continued in service at least through 1863.

13. CSR, Roll 956; Official Records, 30, Pt. 2: 417, 432. A younger brother of Lorenzo, Henderson H. Hylton was quickly exchanged. At the 1863 battle of Chickamauga, Henderson Hylton received official praise for personally capturing the battle flag of the 89th Ohio.

14. CSR, Rolls 408, 956. John S. Lacy had originally been a musician in the 4th Virginia. The Carroll County native transferred to the 54th Virginia Infantry and was a first lieutenant when killed.
others wounded in the Regiment. Col. Pogue\(^{15}\) of the 50th Regiment was killed and severely wounded. Several of the 63rd were wounded. You can tell Riley Hylton and Hanah\(^{16}\) that John W. and Joshua\(^{17}\) was not hurt. They were exposed to the fire of the cannons and guns. There were several of the battery were wounded and killed. There were 35 or 35 killed and wounded out of our Brigade. The enemy's loss not known but will exceed ours three to one.\(^{18}\)

You wrote to me that you had paid all but Dr Stiglemen and Stewart. You need not mind about paying Stiglemen yet a while if you have not the money to spare ... there is some paper at Henry Slusher's... I will get his Brother to write to him to send it down to Elijah Weddle Hyltons for you as I cannot get any paper down here where we are.

You wrote to me that you had not been vaccinated yet. I think you had better if you can conveniently. We all have been vaccinated.\(^{20}\) It does not hurt much. It makes a person's arm a little sore for a day or so. Austin Harman\(^{21}\) and S. P. Weddle\(^{22}\) send their respects to you....

\(^{15}\) John D. Chapla, *50th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1997), 181. In 1861 Thomas Poage left his Pulaski law practice and became colonel of the regiment the following spring. At Kelly's Store, he was "struck in the thigh by a shell fragment ... which severed the main artery, and he bled to death in a few minutes."

\(^{16}\) 1860 Floyd County Census; CSR, Roll 956. Riley Harrison Hylton, his wife Hannah Wade, and three children lived in the Laurel Branch sector of Floyd County. He was briefly imprisoned at Point Lookout, Md., near the end of the war.

\(^{17}\) John William Hylton, a distant cousin, enlisted in the 54th Virginia Infantry on the same date as Lorenzo Hylton. In 1864 he died of illness in a military hospital. Joshua Hylton was an original member of Company D. He was captured in 1864 and confined at Rock Island, Ill., until his February, 1865, parole. CSR, Roll 956.

\(^{18}\) *Official Records*, 18: 145. Confederate losses at Kelly's Store were 8 killed and 31 wounded. Federal losses, listed in one source as 13 killed, 108 wounded, 12 missing, are exaggerated.

\(^{19}\) CSR, Rolls 931, 957. A native of the Burk's Fork region of Floyd County, Henry Slusher had been captain of Company D until his January, 1862, resignation. He later re-enlisted in the 51st Virginia and spent March-May, 1865, as a prisoner-of-war at Fort Delaware.

\(^{20}\) Alfred Jay Bollet, *Civil War Medicine: Challenges and Triumphs* (Tucson: Galen, 2002), 291–92. "At this time," another member of the 54th Virginia Infantry recalled, "considerable excitement got up about Small Pocks and we were Vaccinated." George Hungate Reminiscences, typescript in possession of the editor. The vaccination process was then so crude that it often produced pyemia and other forms of fatal blood poisoning.

\(^{21}\) CSR, Roll 954. Harman was captain of Hylton's company. This Floyd County farmer was eventually promoted to major and wounded twice before his 1865 parole.

\(^{22}\) CSR, Roll 958. Simon P. Weddle had been an original enlistee in Company D. Elected a lieutenant in March, 1864, Weddle deserted the army two months later.
Dear Wife,

... We are ordered to Petersburg. we will leave this evening or in the morning.... I would like to come to the Southwest as it will be a heap better thare than it is down here and we can get better water....

I wish to God that this war would come to an end so as we all git to come home and enjoy the grate blessings that [we] once did enjoy, but I can tell you that thare will be Some of the hardest fighting done this Spring that ever has bin since the [war] began. Soon as the mud drys up the Yankees is determined to Strike one more blow....

Camp Jackson
Wytheville, Va
April the 4th 1863

Dear Wife,

I have know news of intrest to write to you at presant, only we ar under marching orders to Tennessee but I cant tell when we will start out.... I was very glad you sent me a pair of socks for I would have needed them before long. I could have done with out the sewing thread that you sent....

Capt Harman wanted me to come home yesterday morning but I would not come as he wanted me to come and take up deserters.23 I would not agree to it as thare is line already enough full a bout deserters and enough kild so I did not want any hard thoughts on me a bout takeing up deserters, but I hope the time will come that I can git to come home with out coming on such an occation ....

Camp Knoxville, Tenn
May the 1st 1863

Dear Wife,

... I have know news of importence to write to you at presant that is interesting. Thare is a grate deal of news that is going that is not so that a boddy don’t know when they here the truthe. So I will say but little a bout

23. Because desertion in the 54th Virginia Infantry was so high, authorities sent military details to home areas in search of the culprits. Hylton’s negative reaction may have stemmed from a basic problem in apprehending runaways. The definition of desertion at the time was the abandonment of service without intent to return. Proving such intent was all but impossible.
this war as there has bin a grate many things said about me concerning this war but I want them to know that I [am] not ruler of the universe and can establish as good a character as the ones that is a pitching their slangs at me....

if I am spared to come home I want you to make me 7 yds of fine black mixt geans if you have the wool to spar and wont be two much trouble to you. If you think it will be two much trouble don't make it. I want it to make me a uniform for next winter if I have to stay in service all live to see that time and this war don't end by that time and if this war does stop before that time it will do for a Sunday soote....

Knoxville Tenn
May the 9th 1863

Dear Wife
... there has bin a grate deal of hard fighting for the last 2 or 3 weeks and it appears that there will be a grate deal more hard fighting done before this war is ended.

I am commanding the Gard that is a garding about eight hundred yankee prisoners and we are looking for about six hundred more in this evening. They are to be sent to City point to be exchange.25

you wrote to me that I need not send you any more money you did not need any. I have know use for it here so it will be safer at home than it will be here So you can buy anything that you want with it out to some good person or just lay it a way....

Knoxville Tenn
May the 16th 1863

Dear Wife
... we here of a deal of fighting going on at different places and a grate many of our friends getting killed and wounded which is all bad news but we must bar with this all as we have to encounter troublies and affections in this world but I hope the time will soon come when we will enjoy the pleasures that we once did when we lived as man and wife. I hope that these dark clouds of war will soon be driven a way and the

24. Hylton was referring to actions at Vicksburg, Miss., and Chancellorsville, Va.
25. North and South had a sporadic prisoner-exchange policy throughout the war. One of the exchange sites in Virginia was City Point (now Hopewell) at the confluence of the James and Appomattox rivers.
bright sunshine of peas burst fourth on our land once more upon our land of trouble so that we all live as a band of brothers and not as enmies.

I will say to you that we are stationed here as a provost guard to guard Knoxville and I can tell you that there is a heap of mean people her.\(^\text{26}\) Things are selling at a very high [price] here. Bale cotton is selling from 20 to 25 dollars per barrel and every thing else as high.

I received a letter from Beaufort Howell\(^\text{27}\) since I have been here. His family was well and sends his best respects to you and to Father and Mother…. while I have not [heard] from M. F. Hylton\(^\text{28}\) and J. H. Hylton\(^\text{29}\) for a long time I have written the two letters and have no got any answer yet….

Knox County Tenn  
June the 25th / 63

Dear Wife

… we are stationed about 8 miles from Knoxville at a bridge called Bells Bridge. The Yankees made a raid in here to the Rail Rode and tore up some of the track and burnt some three or four bridges and tore down the Telegraph wire and burnt some of the depots and two houses of raw cotton.\(^\text{30}\) The damages is small to what they could have done if we had given them time but our Cavarly did not give them time to do much. They had to leave and get a way the best way they could. They capturd some of our Regt and pyrold them. They capturd our Commissary and his horse and four thousand Dollars…. the men that they capturd of our Regt was men that was broke down and left behind. It was some two or three and they was a Straglin wher they had kno bisness. You will here a heap of big

\(^{26}\) Weaver, *54th Virginia Infantry*, 69. Floyd County soldier William Howell found the Knoxville area more enjoyable. “The sitzens around heard has sined a petition to keepe this regimient hear to guard this place,” he wrote home. “I would be very glad to stay at this place being that I haft to be in service.”

\(^{27}\) William Beaufort Howell farmed in the Indian Valley area of the county.

\(^{28}\) CSR, Roll 683. Mathias Francis Hylton was a corporal in Company A of the 24th Virginia until his April 2, 1865, wounding near Farmville.

\(^{29}\) CSR, Roll 683. Another of Lorenzo’s brothers, John Hancock Hylton, served in the 24th Virginia. He was captured April 6, 1865, and died at Point Lookout Prison, Md.

\(^{30}\) *Official Records*, 23, Pt. I: 385. Anxious to bring East Tennessee under control, Union authorities in June ordered Col. William Price Sanders to take a large mounted brigade on a raid to destroy rail lines and other communications in the Knoxville area. Federals ripped up over 20 miles of track, burned two major bridges, and reached the outskirts of Knoxville itself.
JAMES ROBERTSON

JAMES ROBERTSON

tales a bout it but you ned not to believe half you here about it so I will
Say know more....

there is a rummer in camp that we will have to go in to Kentucky
a gain but I cant tell whether it is so or not. I hope it is not so for I don’t
want any thing to do with Kentucky.

you will have to do the best you can a bout your harvest for I don’t
think that I will get to come home to help do it this time. you dont know
how I want to see you and the children. I tell you that it would do me more
good to see you and the children than anything that I ever saw but I don’t
think that this thing will last much longer for the souldeiers is gitting so
dissatisfied that it is hard to keep them to gether any more but I am a fraid
that it will make a bad matter worse to brake up and go home with out a
compromise.... I want to see pese as bad as any boddy but I want to see it
on fair turms. so I hope that you will pursue the corse that you have under
taken and hold fast to that is good if we never should see each other a gain
on this earth is my prare....

Knoxville Tenn
July the 7th 1863

Dear Wife

I am blesst one more with the privilidge or writing you a few lines
to [let] you know that I ... am nealy broke down and werid out from the
effects of our long march.... I have bin in service 15 months and I have
never seen such a time as this one. I thought that our trip last fall in
Kentucky was a hard one. it was nothing to this one to Tullahoma.31 we
was 19 days and nights out on the Scout after the Yankees, 8 after them
that come by Knoxville and 9 days from the time we left Knoxville till
we got back to Tullahoma. I[t] was the awfullist time that I ever saw ... it
rained all the time while we was gon.

we left Knoxville on the 6th of June and got back on the 6th of July.
we had nothing but a blanket, a pice [musket] and our rations in our haver
sacks. we started Friday and landed at Tullahoma on Sunday. we then got
off of the cars and marcht a bout a quarter of a mile and took up camp in

31. Why Hylton’s regiment was sent to Tullahoma, lying midway between Nashville and Chattanooga,
is not known. His previous letter was written June 25 from Knoxville.
the rain and mud for the night. the next morning we was ordered in to a line of battle a bout 4 miles from where we campt to wait for the Yankees. we staid in line for a bout 2 hours and it … raind so hard that the Yankees did not come … we fell back and commenst throuwing up brest works and chopping down the timber in front of them. We worked for a bout 24 hours and it was raining very near all the time. we completed a line of brestworks a bout a mile in length and lay down in the rain and mud to rest and lay thare till about 1 oclock when we was roused by Col Wade.32 we then began to retreat through the rain and mud. our Brigade coverd the retreat with a bout two thousand Caverly in our rear and of all the times that I ever [knew] it was one of them. mud bout half leg deep.

a bout 12 oclock the sun come out and [of] all of the hottest wether that I ever felt, it was then. It appeard like it would melt evry thing be kneeth it and of the sight that I ever saw the rodes was crowded with men and wagons and horses so that you could not tell head or tail. thare was severl cases of sun stroke. some of them proved fatle…. we traveled on in this way for 4 days and my feet had grate blisters on them and nealy evry boddy that I seen was broke down.

So we ar back at Knoxville but I cant tell how long we will stay here … you said that you herd that we all had bin in a fight and a grate many was kild and the rest taken prisoners.33 you need not put any dependence in such tails until some one writes it to you or some other person … that you know will tell the trough for thare is men in this Regt that will not tell the trough when they see any thing with their own eys….

Floyd Co. Va
July 15th 1863

Dear Husband,

…Your kind and welcome letter of the 7th was received today and I was glad to hear that you was not in a fight and hope that you may never get in a fight and hope also that you will trust in the Lord that he may provide a way for you that you may never be in a fight, for it is my desire that you never may. I am sorry to hear that you had such a long and fatigueing march.

32. Lieutenant Col. John Jesse Wade of Montgomery County was the last commanding officer of the 54th Virginia Infantry. He was practicing law in Pearisburg when war began.
33. Weaver, 54th Virginia Infantry, 71–72. Actually, the condition of the regiment was quite the reverse. So disgusted with army life was a Carroll County company that it deserted en masse.
It has been very wet here which has thrown people back with their work, but I have got over my Corn and yesterday I got some hands and cut down all my wheat and put in shock. it made ninety dozen good wheat.

We have heard that the troops that went into Maryland had a very hard battle and a good many of them were killed and wounded. we hear that George Pfleiger,34 George Kitterma35 and Frazer Dobyns36 are among the killed and that George and William Goodykoontz,37 John Head38 and John Helms39 are among the wounded. John A. Matthia40 we have not heard from yet but hope that they are not hurt.

I want to know if Vixburg is taken or not.41 we have heard that it was and want to know ....

You don't know how bad I want to see you since I have professed a change from nature to grace and we don't know whether we ever shall see each other again and want to know if you are also aiming to obtain the great blessing as for my own part. I feel and desire to persevere onward on trying to walk in the ways of the Lord to the end of my days and I want you plainly to write what Church you think right or that you would rather than I should join, for I have heard that you had wrote that you believed that no other Church were right but the Dunkards [Primitive Baptists] and if you think they are, I want you to cite me to the Scripture that you believe it from, and if you never wrote it I want you to say nothing about it for I want to live in peace, the reason why I want to settle down upon some Church for I have been solicited by different Churches which tends rather to confuse my mind.

34. CSR, Roll 410. Mrs. Hylton was referring to the July 1–3 battle of Gettysburg. George W. Phlegar, a member of the "Montgomery Fencibles" in the 4th Virginia, was killed on the third day's fighting.
35. CSR, Roll 684. The next five soldiers mentioned by Mrs. Hylton were all members of the 24th Virginia. It took heavy casualties in Pickett's Charge. Lieutenant George W. Kitterman, a 20-year-old Floyd farmer, was captured and held prisoner for eight months.
36. CSR, Roll 684. Dobyns, son of prosperous merchant Samuel Dobyns, was likewise captured and not paroled until February, 1865.
37. CSR, Roll 681. Brothers George W. and William McKendree Goodykoontz were from the Wills Ridge area of Floyd County. George was wounded in the face at Drewry's Bluff in June, 1864. William had suffered two injuries when he was disabled again at Gettysburg.
38. CSR. Roll 682. John W. Headen left medical studies for the army and was a lieutenant when wounded at Gettysburg. He ended the war as a captain.
39. CSR. Roll 682. A 19-year-old barkeeper when he joined the 24th Virginia, John W. Helms was promoted to sergeant and wounded at both Second Manassas and Gettysburg. He subsequently transferred to the 21st Virginia Cavalry.
40. CSR, Roll 684. Floyd County resident John Albert Matthews was a wagoner by trade when he enlisted. He served as an ambulance driver until his April, 1863, desertion from the army.
41. The last major Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River, Vicksburg surrendered to Union forces on July 4, 1863.
I believe that I would be satisfied in either the Methodist or Baptist Church, if the Methodist will baptize by immersion. The Methodist have visited me and have seemed very kind to me and have lent me a book on baptism but I have not read it through yet, but I am not convinced that baptism by sprinkling is the proper mode for the scripture speaks of John baptizing in Jordan.

I want you to write me your opinion and I will keep it to myself and if we never meet again on this earth I hope that we will be meetin in heaven where I hope expect to go when I leave this world.

I can go to a Church but not be baptized till you come home if you choose. So no more but remain your lovin wife.

Barbara E. Hylton

Knoxville Tenn
July the 17th 1863

Dear Wife

It is through the kind mercys of God that I seat myself to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well as common. I have redust in flesh till I only weigh a 160 lbs. I am grate porer than I was when at home last summer. I hav bin falling off ever since I have bin in this state.... we ar here a throwing up brest works a round Knoxville but I cant tell how long we will stay here. I don’t think we will stay here long. Some thinks we will come back to Virginia and [some] thinks we will go to Ky ... but I think we will come to Va. And if we do I will try and git a furlough and come home. I don’t known whether I can git one or not as furloughs is hard to git....

there is a grate many of our Regt sick. Ira\textsuperscript{42} has bin sick for severl days but is some better. Francis Herter\textsuperscript{43} is very low. I don’t think he will last long. John Thomas,\textsuperscript{44} that Marid Almira, was taken last evening very sudden with the cramp Collick and was sent to the horse pittle and is bad. thare has bin some 3 or 4 other cases of the same kind.

so I will say a few words to you about you joining a church. I want you to join some church and be baptize but I want to hold on till I come

\textsuperscript{42} CSR, Roll 956. Ira Slusher Hylton was the eldest of Burwell Hylton’s 16 children. A Wills Ridge farmer, he was thirty-six years old at his enlistment in the 54th Virginia Infantry. In June, 1864, he deserted into Union lines.

\textsuperscript{43} CSR, Roll 955. Francis Harter of Company D died of disease on July 19 at Knoxville.

\textsuperscript{44} CSR, Roll 958. John W. Thomas and his wife Almira lived near Floyd Court House. On May 15, 1864, he was captured at Resaca, Ga. Thomas died at Camp Douglas Prison, Ill.
home if I live to come as it will be a grate pleasure to me to talk with you before you ar baptize....

Floyd County Va. August the 5th 1863

Dear Husband,

... I have no news of intrest to rite. we have a great deal [of] wet wether that hinders us from work. I got my wheat up to day. you wanted to hear from John and Mat.45 we heard from them to day. they are well and near Culpeper Court Housr and Jacob46 we have not heard from him in a long time. I can say to you that William Goodykoontz is at home wounded very bad in the left breast and shoulder. I wrote to you that George Pfleger was ded. he is not dead but is wounded very bad.

I can say to you that the people keeps Marring. Old John Wade47 to Miss Mazy Smith and Eden Spangler to Miss Eve Read.48 people would marry if the plow had to stand still....

you rote to me that you wanted me to join the Baptist. that was my choice.... I am going to the Westfork Church Saturday week to unite myself with the Church if they will receive me ....

I want you to strive on. You said you could not get along. don’t give it up. the last and darkest hours will be the litest.... no more at present but remain your true wife until death.

Bells Bridge Knox Co Tenn
Aug the 13th 1863

Dear Wife

... helth is the grates blessing that we can enjoy in this wourld. if we could only have pease with it [it] would be a grate blessing but a grate many of us is deprived of that privilege. my helth has bin bad ever since I have bin in this State tho some better at this time. the hot wether don’t a gree with me and the watter is not good. it is not cool like our watter....

45.CSR, Roll 683. See also note 28. The seventh of the Hylton siblings and a carpenter by trade, John Hancock Hylton served in the 24th Virginia. At the end of the war he was a prisoner at Point Lookout, Md.
46.CSR, Roll 650. In February, 1862, a younger brother, Jacob S. Hylton, enlisted in the 22nd Virginia. He was captured in November, 1863, and died March 4, 1864, at Fort Delaware Prison.
47.1860 Floyd County Census. John Wade, Sr., a widower in his early fifties, lived in the Wills Ridge area.
I recon you here most of the news that is a going. the Yankees [are] in middle Tenn and is reported a distroying a grate deal of grain and driving off all of the Stock and negros they can lay hands on.\textsuperscript{49} from the citizens it is reported that there is a larg army at Kingston a bout 50 or 60 miles from here but I cant tell whether it so or not. we here that they ar fixing for another big battle at Gordonsville below Richmond,\textsuperscript{50} may God for bid that ever an other battle should be fought like the one in Pennsylvania or any where else. oh how cruel it is in the sight of God for men to be Slaughterd up in such a manner as our people has bin in this war.... I always have believed that this war was sent upon us for our wickedness to seurge us for our sins and in his own good time [God] will remove it from our land so I will change the subject.

I State to you that ... to the best of my recollection I wrote to him [cabinet-maker J. H. Slusher] that I could give the dunkards credit for being opposed to this [war] and they were right in being against it. that is a bout [the] words I wrote to the best of my knolledge. I did not say that the church was right ... so I wish when people heres anything they would tell it as it is write.

I will say to you that I have sent a big check blanket of yourn home in Austin Harman's Trunk and them brown pants of mine they are nearly wore out ... I also sent some thing in Samuel Slusher's Trunk from Wytheville....

Floyd Co, Va
October 8th 1863

Dear Husband,

... Your kind and welcome letter of 25\textsuperscript{th} September was received yesterday which gave me much satisfaction to hear that you did no get hurt in the battle,\textsuperscript{52} for I have seen more uneasiness for the last two months than I have since this war commenced....

\textsuperscript{49} With Vicksburg now firmly in Union hands, Federals stepped up their activities to carry the war through Tennessee. No major battles occurred at this time.

\textsuperscript{50} It was then quiet in Virginia. Both sides were still recovering from losses incurred at Gettysburg.

\textsuperscript{51} 1860 Floyd County Census; CSR, Roll 957. A shoemaker in the Greasy Creek area of Floyd County, Lt. Samuel Slusher deserted the 54th Virginia Infantry in June, 1864.

\textsuperscript{52} Mrs. Hylton's reference was to the September 19–20 battle of Chickamauga, Ga., where the Confederates won a bloody but hollow victory.
Ananias\textsuperscript{53} has got home safe and probably will write to you today and can inform you himself better than I can, and John H. Hylton is now at home on a fifteen days furlough but is to start back tomorrow. he is well and states that Mat was well when he left them. They got a letter from Mat yesterday stating he was well. We have not heard from Jacob Hylton for some time. if you know anything about him when you write let me know if he is in the hospital or whether he has come back to the regiment.

Old Aunt Caty Hylton\textsuperscript{54} is dead. she was buried last Sunday week, and also Len Dickerson\textsuperscript{55} is dead. he died a few days before old Mrs. Hylton died. Jacob S. Harman and his daughter Nancy\textsuperscript{56} have both joined the Dunkard Church some weeks ago.

I have got all my corn cut off and put up in and have seeded a part of the field in wheat. I have sowed five bushels and a half of wheat. A. J. Jones\textsuperscript{57} helped to cut off the corn and done the seeding for me.... I have sold my bacon. I could not sell it for gold and silver. I sold it for a dollar a pound for bail cotton and some calico. I thought that better than taking confederate money for it....

I want you to write me and answer this letter as soon as you can for I shall be uneasy till I hear from you again and I want you to write as often as you can. Give my love and respects to Henderson and all my friends after reserving a portion for your self.... The children seem to be the gladest to hear this last letter from you than any one before. they said they wanted you to come home.

Nothing more but remain your loving wife till death.

\textsuperscript{53} CSR, Roll 955. Ananias Burwell Hylton enlisted March 28, 1862, in Company A of the 54th Virginia Infantry. He returned to duty and was captured at Atlanta. Ananias Hylton died November 11, 1864, at Camp Douglas Prison, Ill.


\textsuperscript{55} 1860 Virginia Census — Patrick County. Leonard Dickerson, a carpenter, lived in the Elamsville section of Patrick County.

\textsuperscript{56} 1860 Floyd County Census. A well-to-do farmer in the Wills Ridge region, Jacob S. Harman had eight children. The third was Nancy, then in her upper teens.

\textsuperscript{57} L. D. Hylton to Barbara Hylton, May 10, 1862, Huff–Hylton Papers. Jones was a young hired hand on the Hylton farm. In a note to Barbara soon after entering service, Hylton stated: “I want you if you cannot manage Jimmy not to keep him .... I told him to be a good boy when I left but I understand that he has bin acting up since I left.”
Chattanooga, Tenn
Nov the 4th 1863

Dear Wife,

It is through the tender mercies of God that I seat myself this evening to write you a few lines to let you know that I have not bin well for the last 8 to 10 days and am some better than I was ....

Simon P. Weddle is coming home after clothing for the company and I want you to send me my things by him: 2 pair of socks, 1 pair of Boots and 2 lbs of butter and one doz of apples. put them in the boots. anything else I can git here such as shirts and drawers without troubling you for them.

A. J. Jones [can] have anything he wants and if he wants any pork this fall and if [we] have any to sell let him have it at the old price and I don't want you to take any confederate money for any old debts that is owen me that was made before war began ....

James W. Pratt58 died at the Hospital Rome, Ga. ...

Lorenzo Hylton was wounded in the November 25, 1863, fighting at Missionary Ridge. Two months later, he sent a short note home.

Mariette, Ga.
Jan. the 20th 1864

Dear Wife

I take the pleasure of writing you a few lines in anser to your kind and welcome letter that come to hand this morning which give me grate satisfaction to here from you. I will say to you that I am Still improving. I can turn myself with out help and can set up long enough to wash and com[b] my head. I shall make an application for a furlough before long if I Still keep improving....

I will have to close. Give my love to A. J. Jones and all inquiring friends. So hoping these few lines may reach you and find you in good health and all the rest. So I will close. Write when you can and give all the news. So remains your husband until deth.

58. Weaver, 54th Virginia Infantry, 209. The Floyd County farmer was buried in Rome, Ga.
On February 14, 1864, Lt. Slusher informed Mrs. Hylton that her husband had died the previous day. Lorenzo was aware toward the end that he would not recover, Slusher wrote. “He was prepar for death. He was always Steddy while in camp and bore the hardships of a Soldier patiently.”

Midway in his service, Hylton had his picture taken and sent the framed ambrotype to his wife. Her undated response serves as the couple’s benediction.

When I received your likeness  
I was overfilled with joy  
I looked upon your smiling face  
And laid it in the drawer.  
I often look upon it  
And shed a many a tear  
And think of you my husband  
The one I love so dear.  
I show it to the children  
And ask them who is that  
They will look a while at it and laugh  
And say I know it is Pap.  
And then they will say O Mother  
Cant you turn it rong side out  
Turn up the pretty little box  
And let poor Pap come out.59

59. Undated poem, Huff–Hylton Papers. Lieutenant Hylton is one of 3,000 Confederate soldiers buried in Marietta Cemetery, Marietta, Ga. His grave is unmarked. In September, 1875, Barbara Hylton married Patrick County farmer James Dillon, who was 19 years her senior. She died April 17, 1911, and is buried in Greasy Creek Cemetery near Willis (which originally was called Hylton).