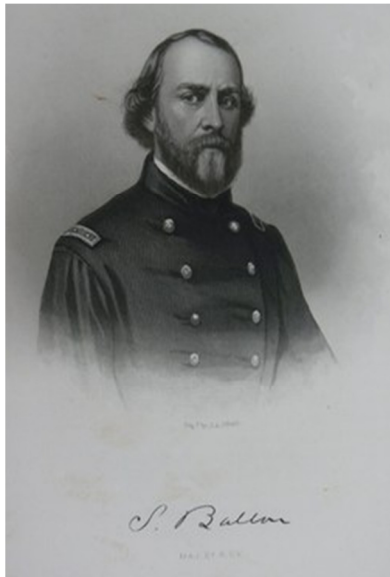


## Sullivan Ballou Letter

July 14, 1861

*Maj. Sullivan Ballou*

*The following is a letter written by Maj. Sullivan Ballou to his wife Sarah (née Shumway) at home in Rhode Island.*



Camp Clark, Washington

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days - perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure - and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. Not my will, but thine O God, be done. If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for my country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans upon the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing - perfectly willing - to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt.

But, my dear wife, when I know that with my own joys I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with cares and sorrows - when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it as their only sustenance to my dear little children - is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, that my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of country?

I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying the last, perhaps, before that of death -- and I, suspicious that Death is creeping behind me with his fatal dart, am communing with God, my country, and thee.

I have sought most closely and diligently, and often in my breast, for a wrong motive in thus hazarding the happiness of those I loved and I could not find one. A pure love of my country and of the principles have often advocated before the people and "the name of honor that I love more than I fear death" have called upon me, and I have obeyed.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me to you with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with all these chains to the battlefield.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and seen our sons grow up to honorable manhood around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me - perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar -- that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name.

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have oftentimes been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortune of this world, to shield you and my children from harm. But I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you, while you buffet the storms with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience till we meet to part no more.

But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the garish day and in the darkest night -- amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours - always, always; and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again.

As for my little boys, they will grow as I have done, and never know a father's love and care. Little Willie is too young to remember me long, and my blue eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dimmest memories of his childhood. Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care and your development of their characters. Tell my two mothers his and hers I call God's blessing upon them. O Sarah, I wait for you there! Come to me, and lead thither my children.

--Sullivan

*Ballou died a week later, at the First Battle of Bull Run. He was 32.*

## **Discussion Questions:**

Who is Sullivan Ballou writing to?

What is he discussing in this letter?

Why do you think he wrote this letter?

Do you think other soldiers wrote letters like this? Why or why not?

How do you think Sarah felt upon reading this letter? How do you feel?

### **Fort Sumter**

Fort Sumter was fired on by Confederate troops on April 12, 1861. It was located in Charleston Harbor, Charleston, SC. General P. G. T. Beauregard commanded the Confederate troops. Robert Anderson, a United States officer, was in command of the fort at the time. South Carolina wanted the Union troops out of the fort. Lincoln sent supply ships that were not permitted to dock at the fort. The Union troops surrendered. The battle lasted 34 hours. The Civil War had begun.

### **Battle of Fredericksburg**

The Battle of Fredericksburg took place from December 11-15, 1862. Fredericksburg, VA is half way between the two capitals of Washington, D.C. and Richmond, VA. General Robert E. Lee was in command of the Confederate troops and General Ambrose E. Burnside was in command of the Union forces. The battle was a Confederate victory with Union casualties numbering 12,653 and Confederate casualties at 5,377.

### **Battle of First Manassas / Bull Run**

The first major battle of the war took place on July 28, 1861. The battle lasted one day. It took place in Manassas, VA, a town in northern Virginia. General P. G. T. Beauregard was in charge of the Confederate forces and General Irwin McDowell commanded the Union troops. Civilians from Washington, D.C. rode in carriages to watch the battle. General Thomas Jackson earned the nickname "Stonewall" during the battle. With this Confederate victory, both sides knew that the war would not end quickly after the battle.

### **Emancipation Proclamation**

On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves in the Confederate states and made the issue of slavery the new focus of the war. The spirit of the Union was renewed and many slaves joined the army.

### **Siege of Vicksburg**

This siege took place from May 18, 1863 through the fall of the fort on July 3. Vicksburg was important because whoever controlled the port controlled the Mississippi River and the supply routes. General John Pemberton was in charge of the Confederate forces and General Ulysses S. Grant commanded the Union troops. Grant took over the fort and control of the Mississippi supply routes, splitting the Confederacy in half, on July 3, 1863.

### **Gettysburg Address**

President Abraham Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address during the dedication of the cemetery for Union soldiers who fought and died in the Battle of Gettysburg. In the address he encourages Americans to remember the sacrifices made by these soldiers. "...we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

### **Battle of Gettysburg**

The Battle of Gettysburg was the bloodiest of the war. It took place in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania beginning on July 1, 1863 and ending on July 3 after three days of fighting. General Robert E. Lee commanded the Confederate troops and General George Meade had just taken control of the Union forces. Union troops had and held the high ground. This was a Union victory and was the turning point of war. The Confederates would never again invade the North and would be fighting a defensive war for the next two years.

### **Appomattox Courthouse**

As the Union troops continued to be victorious on the battlefield following Vicksburg and Gettysburg, the condition of the Confederate army deteriorated. Lee's troops were starving, ragged, and steadily deserting. Finally, in April of 1865, Grant's forces trapped Lee's men at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia. Unable to fight back, Lee arranged to meet with Grant to surrender. Lee's surrender to Grant on April 9, 1865 marked the end of the Civil War.

Use the clues to write summaries of the Battle / Event Cards. Each team member should take a turn as recorder to write the summaries. Include all groups member names on the finished summaries.

1. The Confederacy wanted Fort Sumter:

So they:

Then Major Anderson:

This was the:

2. In the Battle of First Manassas everyone wanted to:

Civilians:

Thomas Jackson:

Victory but:

3. In the Battle of Fredericksburg the Union wanted to:

But the Confederates:

4. On January 1, 1863:

This gave the Union armies a new:

Many slaves:

5. Vicksburg was important because:

Grant wanted:

On July 3, 1863:

The Confederacy was:

6. The Battle of Gettysburg took place on:

Where:

High ground:

Turning point:

Never again:

7. The Gettysburg Address was given by:

Because:

It said:

8. Appomattox Courthouse is important:

Lee felt:

So he:

Marked the end:

