

[Mary Alice Black to James Hammond Black; postmarked November 20, 1931]

Friday AM

Dearest Jim,

I believe it has been about a week since I have written or tried to write you. I am still in bed and will be here quite a while. I see very little improvement from three weeks ago. I felt very well yesterday, but not so good today. I am so very thin my weight before I got sick for months was only eighty-five. I went in sitting room yesterday for girl to clean my room a little. I am taking digitalis three times a day – no so good huh?

I mean to thank you offering to send me something but gave out before I did, so will say I appreciate the offer. Times are so hard, but if you are going to try and send Christmas presents, I don't think I would if I were you trying to help Cecelia at school, but if so any way and you go to get me something get it for Clifton instead. If any thing happens and I get any money will send it to you. I hate to say anything about it as I am such a dead expense on everybody and have been for many a year you know.

Mr. Way¹ leaves us – haven't heard where he goes. We get Mr. Peter Stokes, Jr. I hear a young May Brabham's husband,² Mr. Walker³ is our Sunday school superintendent. We have a real good crowds and he is a good worker. May teaches and all the Brabhams take great interest.

The Baptists have dismissed their preacher on account of money.

Mrs. Ussery⁴ has moved in with Miss Lottie⁵ and Jim⁶ in Miss Sarah Furses old house. Paul Morris is in the house Cousin Annie⁷ lived in. Cousin A is in Jim's house⁸ that he moved out of. Mr. Milledge Rountree⁹ is with Mr. Tompson¹⁰. Junius P is going to move into Mr. Rountree's house and Willie G where Mr. Boyd killed himself. Miss Lottie is repairing it some for Willie or adding on.

Mama is up and that's about all. We have the best girl helping we have ever had. Carrie, John Major's girl.

¹ The Methodist Preacher

² Idis Brabham's daughter – they lived in Hattievill, which was "up the road" toward the Savannah River Plant.

³ He was from Augusta

⁴ Miss Lottie's mother.

⁵ Furse – married Dope Jordan from Laurinburg, NC. Had a bottling company there.

⁶ Furse

⁷ Cousin Annie lived near Oldfield

⁸ Way back in the woods. She had a radio and that is where all the Millett families would gather for the men to listen to the prize fights.

⁹ Janie Rountree's husband. She was a Bellinger before she married him.

¹⁰ Top of the hill past the Lower Three Run's Cemetery but before coming to the church going toward Allendale.

Kate¹¹ came this PM – they are all going to Augusta tomorrow.

Leize and Kate are planning to go to Aunt Polly's¹² for Thanksgiving. Hope they will, it will do Leize good to get off.

Cecelia wrote she went to the Orangeburg Fair with Frampton Harper.¹³ You know he is Harry Harper's brother, Mr. William Henry's and Miss Livies' son.

One day for Xmas is rotten. Thought you may have more even if you couldn't come home.

The whooping cough is about over. Polly's is the worst one.

Write when ever you can.

Love, Alice

PS

Tell Roscoe¹⁴ hello for me.

¹¹ Katherine Kirkland, sister of Pauline Kirkland Black, Alice's mother.

¹² Pauline Riley, sister of Sarah Cornelia Kirkland and Savannah Elizabeth Bates (Aunt Coonch), the aunt of Kate and Pauline. She lived in Orangeburg and was very wealthy.

¹³ Clifton Harper was Alice's boyfriend. Frampton was a relative of Clifton. He later married Hart Peeples.

¹⁴ A friend of Jim's in NY

[Pauline Kirkland Black to James Hammond Black, dated September 17, 1931]

Millettville, SC
Sept. 17th, 1931

Dear Jim

Received your letter some time ago, but as Leize has written you lately, thought I would wait awhile. Cecile got off Monday AM at 8 o'clock. She went on the train. Bratton's girls¹⁵ met her & took her to the college. She wrote back yesterday she had gotten there OK. Esther¹⁶ sent me a lovely piece of silk material for a dress, black with tan flowers. It will make up lovely, will make it soon. I have been having fever for a week & feel weak & nervous, hope to get better soon. I have taken quinine & a tonic. Kate came home Friday PM, went back Sunday PM. She likes it very much, says the ladies are all very sociable. She boards with Mrs. Bessie Weathersbee¹⁷ on Rail Road Avenue. Sarah and William¹⁸ are still in NC, will be there until Oct.

I wrote Esther thanking her for the dress & told her all the news of interest. The farmers are busy gathering their crops & jinning cotton – brings so little it hardly pays to pick it. Jennings¹⁹ (Eloise's little boy) has started to school this year, she comes by & takes Leize, Edwina & June with her every day. Leize pays her by the week, she goes anyway, so it saves Leize from walking. No news of interest. Junius works for the government at the river now, so is making something for them all. Write when you have time.

Sincerely,
Mama

¹⁵ Cousin Bratton Kirkland lived in Columbia and Meyer's Mill. He did some work in the legislature here. Ruth has a newspaper clipping about him. He was Jimmy Lesesne's uncle.

¹⁶ A friend of Jim's in NY.

¹⁷ Aunt Kate taught school in Williston & boarded with Bessie Weathersbee, who was Kin to Ben Lewis' wife, Mattie Weathersbee. She was killed in an automobile accident and Ben then married a widow who was kin to Governor Richard Riley. He was Mary Lewis' father and Elizabeth Allen's uncle.

¹⁸ William Black was Paul Delacy Black's brother. He and his wife, Sarah, lived in Williston.

¹⁹ The famous Jennings who fell out of the back of the car when June was riding with Aunt Kate and his mother, Eloise. Jennings' father was Paul Walker, who is in a picture with Grandmamma and Jim in front of the house. His father, JJ Walker once owned Belfast.

[Mary Alice Black to James Hammond Black; postmarked December 8, 1931]

Dearest Jim,

I received your letter a few days ago and was glad to hear from you. Was glad you had a nice Thanksgiving and Roscoe was well. We had a nice dinner. Clifton went to Columbia for Frampton and Cecelia. We were glad to have both of them to dine with us. Most all the grandchildren were here.

I am feeling much better now. Yes, I have been having grand fires ever since I have been sick. Leize had about twelve dollars worth of wood cut right at (near) the house. Mr. Brunson had a lot of grand logs left in the field by the railroad he couldn't ship and told Papa to take them. I think maybe if nothing happens we will have enough to last until Feb. I know you are strapped for money, so if you feel able after Xmas and can spare it, you can help out a little with the wood. But we can make do for Papa will get some you know if we don't have any, and I would rather you send or keep Cecelia at Carolina if possible, for I can do all right and get on, on very little, not going out so much and haven't in three or four months. I have been to Augusta about four times, Allendale two or three times and Williston one. Meyer's Mill two or three times since you left in July and Orangeburg for a week in the summer. Haven't been able and in a poor way so we don't get out of sight of Millett. Just as well as we are all broke and everywhere is I think.

I haven't gained so much. I took so much medicine I couldn't eat. But I can now, and have been drinking a qt. of milk daily.

Leize finished Sister's²⁰ dress you sent and it surely looks nicely. Mamma made Edwina a nice looking coat out of Cecelia's old one.

If you haven't bought or can buy something for me for Clifton's Xmas present and the price same get me bedroom slippers instead as I heard him tell Leize all his kin always gave him socks and ties also handkerchiefs or pretty scarves. He prefers slippers though. He wears a 7 shoe and his robe is tan and brown, don't send me a Xmas present as I would rather leave one for him.

Write when you can.

Love, Alice

²⁰ Katherine Black

[Pauline Kirkland Black to James Hammond Black; December 17, 1931]

Millettville, SC
Dec 17, 1931

Dear Jim,

Alice received your letter a few days ago and we were glad you had a nice Thanksgiving at Roscoe's. It does make you feel better to get away from responsibilities occasionally. I have not been well many days lately & Alice being sick has caused me to neglect to write you as I should have done. The others have written. When I wasn't busy, I would lie down to rest as much as possible. Alice went down to Annie K's Tuesday. She came and said she thought a little change might help her. Mr. Leike has a new double seated car. She wrapped up & went for a few days. She has been very sick, but I hope now she is mending. We have a very nice big hog to kill & had planned to kill it today, but it has poured rain all day, so had to put it off. Will send you a box when we got it fixed. It has been too warm to kill before. Paul²¹ and Sam W have put the sash²² in the sitting room. They look very nice & have fixed some of the other windows but haven't finished yet.

Willie Snelling has bought a lot from Kate between CB²³'s old store & Bailey's²⁴ in the pine thicket & is having a log house built – it looks very nice. 4 rooms with a porch. Junius, Jim Duncan, Willie Terry & some negros are doing the work. They are covering it now. All the schools close tomorrow except Kate's. They will teach until next Tuesday PM. Guess Cecile will come about Saturday unless she gets a ride with some one. I hear Mr. Fowke is to take Miss Hoover to Hartsville & bring Adelaide²⁵ back, if there is room. Guess she will come with them. We sure do appreciate the sash, & think it the most useful present you could have given us. No news of interest. Hope you will have a very pleasant Xmas & Happy & prosperous New Yra.

With love from us all.

Sincerely,
Mama

²¹ Paul Delacy Black

²² Window panes

²³ Ellis

²⁴ A 2-story building with the store downstairs and living quarters upstairs. Across the railroad track from JJ Snelling's store, but down toward Junius and Carrie's house.

²⁵ Adelaid Dunbar was at Coker College at the time.

[Paul Delacy Black to James Hammond Black; January 13, 1932]

Millettville, SC

Jan. 13th, 1932

Dear Jim,

I was glad to hear from you but sorry the birds did not carry well. Everything down here is not bright, but I think I can see signs of better times ahead. People must get back to living within their means. There is no danger of suffering in the country. CB Dunbar and Telie celebrated their golden wedding last night, had a good crowd & everything passed off nicely. I think if I were you, I would stick with the law this year and things may take an unexpected turn your way if business picks up. You might make some connection in the south and I certainly would rather see you nearer home – but we can't have things just our way.

I will try and stop the leak in the dining room & think I will put boards over head as it won't cost much for that little, then a few drops of water won't show. If I sell my dog I can do this & not bother you. I will let you know later what I do.

All of us are about as usual. Alice is at Annie Kirkland's²⁶ for a few days & I think she will enjoy being out of her room a while & she will get the best of attention there.

People are starting to farm, but it will be on a smaller scale which I think is best. Anything you want me to do down here, let me know.

Yrs XC

PD Black

²⁶ Lawton Kirkland's mother, a descendant of Needham Franklin Kirkland, John Cornelius' twin and Pauline Kirkland's first cousin.

[Mary Alice Black to James Hammond Black; January 24, 1932]

Millettville, SC

Jan 24, 1932

Dearest Jim,

I have thought for a long time I would write you but kept putting it off. I want to thank you for that tie you sent me for Clifton. It was lovely and he liked it so much. It was the only one he got this Xmas he said.

Everybody here has gone to Church, but Mattie Brown²⁷ is staying with me. I am getting on real well now, for the last few days. The middle of the week, I had pleurisy. It seems to be one darn thing after the other.

Willie's house is about finished now. He is going to move in next week. It is real cute, they say.

I am going up to Cornelia's next week for a few days. I sit up a little my heart is so much better.

Mrs. Dahlgard sent me a beautiful pair of hose for my birthday. Blum & Esther²⁸ sent me a nice box of candy. I wrote them and thanked them.

Do you ever see Buddie McKie and how is he?

I had a letter from Cecelia this week – she said she was studying for exams.

Give Roscoe my regards when you see him.

Mamma thanked Mrs. R for me – did she get the letter? Tell her hello for me.

The trees are budding and flowers are blooming down here.

Aunt Telie & Uncle Charlie had the golden anniversary down at Lucile Johnson's²⁹ last week. Got lots of nice things but all were not gold. All kinds of things and thirty four dollars in money. A large crowd too.

Everybody down here is fine, I believe.

Clifton sailed the ninth for Calif. Write whenever you can.

Love, Alice

²⁷ The negro teacher who had 2 stores. Her house was across the railroad track from Paul & Lena's and near Junius and Carrie's house.

²⁸ Friends of Jim's in NY.

²⁹ Daughter of Charlie and Telie. HE Johnson's mother.

[Pauline Kirkland Black to James Hammond Black; January 26, 1932]

Millettville, SC

Jan 26, 1932

Dear Jim,

As Alice has written you will just write a note. Cornelia came for her yesterday PM to stay a few days. Thought maybe getting out might help her a little. She is very gloomy over her condition, but I think she is some better. Will never be well again. Mr. Willie Hays, Ben Hays'³⁰ brother who was a policeman at Ellenton got killed Saturday night by a negro. He went to arrest him for fighting. The negro shot him. Hays also shot so both were killed.

Cecelia wrote Alice a few days ago. She is well & having exams. She has been writing to Carrie for some pajamas, but C says she will have to wait awhile. She has no money now. I thought maybe you might pick up some cheap ones for her if you think you can. I am only suggesting. Junius has finished Willie's house & has no job at present. They have been living on his wages.

Write when you can.

Sincerely,

Mama

³⁰ Kathleen Snelling's second husband. Her first husband was British and killed during World War I.

[Pauline Kirkland Black to James Hammond Black; March 30, 1932]

Millettville, SC
March 30th, 1932

Dear Jim,

Alice received your letter last week and we were so glad to hear from you, & glad your cold is better. I went to Williston last Sunday PM week ago & stayed with Kate until Friday PM. We went to Augusta that afternoon & spent the night with Mattie.³¹ Kate had some business there Sat morning, so thought it would save time & gas to go there before coming home. We got home that afternoon and found Cecile here. She came on the bus to Allendale & Mr. Mincow³² brought her home. He has a daughter taking a business course in Columbia who finished with Cecile at high school. They are very good friends so she was quite lucky. She went back from Allendale Monday PM on the bus. Paul took her there. Leize & Cornelia made her a beautiful silk dress while here. Leize gave her a real pretty print dress she bought ready made. Cornelia lent her a nice brown silk of hers for the rest of the term. She brought her clothes & had them all nicely done up. So she went back very well fixed up. Kate gave her a pair of bloomers & 1 pair of stockings. We all gave her a handkerchief apiece. We have a skirt to make yet, couldn't get it done. Loring³³ gave a party Friday night & Emily J³⁴ one Sat. night so think she enjoyed her outing. Adelaide came Sat morning with her beau from Hartsville & returned Sunday. We didn't see her.

I had a nice time in Williston. Miss Bessie³⁵ was so nice to me. I spent 2 days and 1 night at William's³⁶. They were very clever. William is real bad off. Sara³⁷ says he is getting weaker. He is very thin and can't walk without a stick. Sara takes the best of care of him. Had delightful things to eat & seemed so glad to have me. Says she gets so lonesome. Harvey³⁸ is in the Linwood Hospital in Augusta & I am afraid he will never be much better.³⁹ When you can, write Sara a nice letter. She talked a lot about you & said she thought so much of you. We went to see Mary H⁴⁰ one afternoon. Kate also took Miss Bessie & Mrs. Cary Smith, a widow who boards with them. We had a very pleasant afternoon. Saw Jim – he is getting & shipping chickens to Mexico; Mary said the first

³¹ Mattie Weathersbee Lewis, Ben Lewis' wife. Ben Lewis & Joe Lewis were half brothers to Theodore Allen (same mother – Aunt Mame) and Mary Lewis is Joe's daughter.

³² Very nice Jewish family who lived in Allendale. The Mincows had children the same age as Cecelia and Ruth.

³³ Loring Snelling was the daughter of Gussie Dunbar and William Snelling.

³⁴ Emily Johnson lived with her daughter, Lucille Johnson.

³⁵ Weathersbee

³⁶ Black, Paul Delacy Black's brother.

³⁷ Black, William Black's wife.

³⁸ Black, William & Sara Black's son.

³⁹ Believed to have died shortly after this letter was written.

⁴⁰ Mary Hammond. Her husband, James, was the person for whom Jim was named. She was a Black cousin of Paul Delacy Black's and lived at Elko. Previously lived at Beech Island and had no children.

order he had gotten in a long time & was delighted. She said Gussie⁴¹ had been there for a visit from NY and lives with Mr. Billings' Frederica's husband, & Frederica. She says he works for or edits the Times. Kate got her address but I forgot to get it from her. Mary wants you to meet them sure.

Alice is improving. She went home with Cornelia yesterday PM. Billy, Edwina & June have had her busy making rag dolls & embroidering them. Billy got Cornelia to make him a dress & bloomers for his. Whatever they have, he has too.

Paul is packing gras⁴² and has gotten 2 crates today. One crate & 8 bunches Mon. Jack⁴³ is cutting too. They will carry it to Hattievill⁴⁴ later where they all ship together in cars – not enough yet so they ship by express now. Junius has been sick for several days, but is some better. He suffers with his side & had a cold too. I am better – my little trip helped me a lot. They all had such good things to eat & treated me lovely. Write when you can.

Sincerely,
Mama

Excuse pencil

⁴¹ Black, Frederica Black's mother. Frederica married John Billings, who was the editor of Time Magazine and lived at Redcliffe.

⁴² Asparagus

⁴³ Snelling

⁴⁴ On the Augusta highway before the bomb plant.

[Pauline Kirkland Black to James Hammond Black; May 12, 1932]

Millettville, SC
May 12, 1932

Dear Jim,

Received your letter yesterday. Sorry to hear of Mr. Blum's illness. Hope he will recover. Give my love & sympathy to Esther & regards to Al when you see them.

Alice went to Williston last Sunday PM with Kate to spend a week. Miss Weathersbee invited her specially. She is some better. We thought the change would help her. They are going to have the faculty plan there tomorrow night. Kate wants us to go to it. Charles will carry her car & leave it & come back with someone who goes from here. They are not going to cut grass after this week, the prices have gone down & it is so dry it is too spindling to pack. It hasn't brought very much at any time this year. I have fed 2 negro men to help Paul haul it & pack it for them, & as usual have gained nothing out of it. I just got enough out of the place to pay taxes last year⁴⁵ & am afraid I won't get that much this year. It has been my lot to do without always. Charles says his pants measurements are 29 in waist and 32 inches length, and to get white duck as he is required to wear that. Sister says as you are giving Charles both pants & shirt, not to bother to send her anything, she says she knows you haven't much money either. Telie gave her 4 yards of real pretty, blue material, we are making that now & trimming it in white organdy. It will be pretty when finished.

Our garden is right pretty but needs rain dreadfully. Elizabeth Allen sent us an invitation to her graduation yesterday. I do hope Julia⁴⁶ will be able to live until it is over. I heard yesterday she was very sick and had gotten worse.⁴⁷ Kate's school closes Friday week & Leize's 2 weeks later. William, Sara & Edward's⁴⁸ daughter came here a while Sunday PM. William is very weak & thin, he said they hadn't elected the teachers yet, but felt sure Kate would be elected again. Mr. Crouch was elected Principal of the Grammar School, & Mr. Player to the High School for another year over there.

Leize's cold is some better, I am getting along very well again. Hope your cold is better, get Womple's cod liver oil, 2 bottles & take it, it helped me very much. All join me in love.

Sincerely,
Mama

⁴⁵ She owned land in the Piney Woods, probably some that she inherited from Aunt Coonch. Aunt Kate's land was where JT Duncan now lives.

⁴⁶ Julia Allen. Elizabeth's parents were first cousins – Theodore was the son of Aunt Mame and Julia was the daughter of the oldest Barker son.

⁴⁷ Julia and Theodore lived in Sycamore and were much worse off financially even than those in Millett. They lost the former Barker land there for taxes later. Julia had TB and made it only one week after Elizabeth's graduation.

⁴⁸ Black family, Paul Delacy Black's brother, William. Sara was his wife and Edward his son.

[From Edward Junius Black to James Hammond Black; February 1, 1933; written on Snelling Brothers letterlead]

CB Snelling

WH Snelling

Snelling Brothers
General Merchandise

Feby 1st, 1933

Dear Jim

I got your letter last week and the shoes a day or two later. I thank you very much for both. The shoes fit fine and feel all right and will do a lot of good for I had none at all that I could wear off Millett.

Allendale county has gotten \$25,000 of the Relief Council money put out by the R.F.C. and the share allotted to the Millett district amounted to \$1,000 and we are using it around the Churches, School houses, etc with the greater portion being used for draining "Itchie" Pond.

I am working a crew of men on the drainage of the pond and receiving \$1.25 per day as foreman of the crew.

I have Charles with me working 50 cents each day and both of us make enough to get along on while the work lasts.

I think that I will be able raise to \$2.00 a little later and it might be possible to get Charles raised to \$1.00 if I can get him appointed time keeper for all the crews. We have all told about 110 men on the job and Millett looks quite busy. I think that it is a bad thing for the country but if the country is going to spend it then I think that we had just as well get our part. I know that it will be a good thing for me presently. I expect to get the mule on Friday from Mr. Kennedy at Williston, and put it to work on Monday. If I can make lots of corn I can get along all right for I can make meat, lard, chickens, meal, hominy and other things. I want to make some syrup and vegetables of all kinds.

I can't tell when the river will recede sufficient for me to get on to that work, but maybe it will by the time this money is spent.

I have never received the letter that I wrote Wils although I had a return card on it. I think maybe that it will show up later. Don't think that he ever had it delivered to him for it was incorrectly addressed.

I think that when we dry the pond that we will all have better health. I am draining the pond back of Willie's house now but will not cut the big pond in till the State Board of Health sends a man to tell us when to do it.

Everybody is well today and nothing else I think interesting to you to write about so will stop.

Sincerely
EJB

[Edward Junius Black to James Hammond Black; February 27, 1933; typed on Snelling Brothers General Merchandise letterhead]

Feb. 27th, 1933

Dear Jim

I received the check two weeks ago and should have written you sooner but thought I would wait till I had something to tell you.

I bought a little mule from Kennedy at Williston and I think that she is going to prove all that I want.

I have fixed and ready to plant about 5 acres of land around the place where I first lived⁴⁹ when I came here and around the place where I now live. All this land is the best in the world and although it will be hard to work this year I think it should produce well. I want to plant about 15 acres in all and expect to have syrup, corn, potatoes, cucumbers, and all the vegetables that I want. I have already planted 10 pecks of potatoes in the little pasture by the back yard, also have the garden all planted and planted Mama's for them Saturday. I bought 25 bushels of corn from Balwin Black and 250 bundles of fodder from another negro. This is not enough to do on but hope to get some more somehow.

The place around the house looks much better since I hauled off the old rubbish and plowed it all up.

The relief work has shut off till the 6th of March, so I will be 3 weeks behind with my grocery bill when it begins again but think I can catch up if it will last long enough. Charles went right to work for Jack building crates as soon as the ditch work stopped and is making about 65 cents a day at that. Katherine is sewing with a bunch of women, for the needy, and making about 50 cents per day.

Cecelia went to Charleston yesterday a week ago expecting to get a job with the American Tobacco Co. She wrote last week that she thought that she would be able to get on this morning. I don't think much of this for it is piece work and you only get paid for what you do and I don't think that she can make much for a long time. I told her when she left not to stay unless she found it satisfactory and profitable.

Today is perfect weather and all the farm work going on is in good shape. I have Lee plowing while I am working and traded with him to pay him with mule power. Don't think that he needed rations and I had to get him \$1.00 worth but can't keep this up.

I want to get out and cut some bushes so will stop. Will write you again as I can.

Sincerely,

⁴⁹ From JJ Snelling's store toward Speedwell Church on the left (other side of the railroad track). Aunt Kate owned it and left it to Katherine Black, who sold it. The Brunsons later lived there.

EJB