

## A family torn apart by war, 1777

### Introduction

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The Revolutionary War divided families. In 1774, eighteen-year-old Lucy Flucker married twenty-four-year-old Henry Knox. Lucy's parents were powerful, wealthy Tories, and they were not happy with the match. Henry Knox was the son of an Irish immigrant. At the age of nine, he quit school to go to work when his father abandoned the family. Henry was also rumored to be a patriot.

Lucy and Henry left Boston in 1775. Henry joined Washington's army, and Lucy was left on her own for the first time in her life. When the British evacuated Boston after the siege in 1776, many loyalists left with them including Lucy Knox's family. After returning to Boston, Lucy felt her family's absence. In this letter, Lucy attempts to reconnect with her sister, Hannah Urquhart, whose husband, James, was a captain in the British 14th Regiment. The heavy editing visible in the image shows how hard it was for Lucy to be caught between her husband and her family:

oh my Sister, how horrid is this war, Brother against Brother – and the parent against the child – who were the first promoters of it I know not but god knows – and I fear they will feel the weight of his vengeance – tis pity the little time we have to spend in this world – we cannot injoy ourselves and our friends – but must be devising means to destroy each other – the art of killing has become a perfect science

### Questions for Discussion

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1. Why did Lucy write this letter?
2. What is the tone of the first part of the letter?
3. Are there particular questions from Lucy that attract your attention? Why?
4. What does Lucy mean when she writes "I am going at last to take the small pox"?
5. How does Lucy assess the impact of the war?
6. How does Lucy end her letter?

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## Images

988, a.      LV. 80  
1776      1776?

P. 16 to be sister's name Hannah Urquhart

The very sincere & tender affection that I entertain for you my dear sister, induces me to write you at this time, notwithstanding the great neglect with which I have been treated both by you & my dear Mama - to her I wrote several times during the Siege of Boston - but never obtain'd a line in answer - a circumstance that surpris'd and griev'd me not a little - since she is now I know not - I am not only deprived of father mother, brother & sisters, but also denied the satisfaction - of hearing of their well being you I am told are at Halifax - if you are it is probable this may reach you and if it should I beg of you - to give me a particular account of my friends, and relations - <sup>as Cap<sup>t</sup> & August with you</sup> is your little boy - living, is he well - where is my brother - when did you hear from <sup>my brother</sup> him - is Sally married or not - I much wish to know all these particulars <sup>entertain</sup> for my father and Mother I ~~entertain~~ <sup>entertain</sup> the most Dutiful ~~and tender~~ <sup>and</sup> affection, and <sup>in</sup> fraternal love ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> not behind hand - therefore am greatly interested in <sup>the answer to the above Query</sup> the above particulars - my dear Henry is well - he my dear sister is as often you hear him, the best and tenderest friends, never were - two persons more happily united than we - <sup>born Dec 26 1776</sup> we have a lovely little girl, of whom I hear & are <sup>our</sup> ~~troupe~~ <sup>troupe</sup> she is very like her grandmother - she looks vastly like <sup>our</sup> Mama - who I hope will one day see her - she will love her I am sure she will - I am going at last to take the small pox - more for the sake of my little Lucy than myself - the Army and the country in general having been inoculated, will make it dangerous for me to go from home without having had it - and in the present state of things I wish to be in such a situation - that I can go to all parts of America without hazard - my Henry is not much at home and

Lucy Knox to Hannah Urquhart, April 1777. (GLC02437.009891 p. 1)

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I do not like to from him - If my sister, how horrid is this war, Brother against  
 Brother - and the parent against the child - who were the first promoters of it  
 I know not but god knows - and I fear they will feel the weight of his  
 vengeance - his just - the little <sup>time</sup> while we have to given in this world - we cannot  
~~burn~~ justify ourselves and our friends - but must be devising means to destroy  
 each other - the art of killing has become a perfect science - that man is well  
 pleased who has the best knack of destroying the human species - in our  
 juvenile days my Hannah we little thought - this barbarous art would so soon  
 have reached America - but her <sup>clubs</sup> ~~fractured~~ ~~facids~~ have become the scene  
 of war ~~and destruction~~ - Battles rages her covered with the dead and dy  
 ing - <sup>at the heartfelt</sup> ~~the grief~~ their sorrows and <sup>must have</sup> ~~suber~~ ~~dear~~ ~~never~~ ~~be~~ ~~told~~

but enough of this god send a speedy issue to this war and give us a  
 happy meeting is the sincere wish and prayer of her who thro all the con  
 stanting scenes of life never will cease to be your affectionate friend  
 and sister  
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Seize Seize Seize

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Lucy Knox to Hannah Urquhart, April 1777. (GLC02437.009891 p. 2)

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### Transcript

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The very sincere or tender affection that I entertain for you my dear Sister induces me to write you at this time, notwithstanding the great neglect with which [*inserted*: I think] I have been treated both by you – and my dear Mama – to her, I wrote several times during the Seige of Boston – but never obtained a line in answer a circumstance that surpris'd and grieved me not a little – where she is now I know not – I am not only deprived of father mother Brother & Sisters but also denied the satisfaction of hearing of their welfare. you I am told are at Halifax – if you are it is propable this may reach you and if it should I beg of you – to give me a particular account of my friends and relations.

is your little Boy – living – is he well – [*struck*: where is my Brother] [*inserted*: is Cap<sup>t</sup> Urquhart with you)] when did you hear from him [*inserted*: my Brother] – is Sally married or not – [*inserted*: where is she.] I much wish to know all these particulars for my father and Mother I [*struck*: love with] [*inserted*: entertain] the most Dutiful [*struck*: and tender] affection – and [*struck*: with] [*inserted*: in] fraternal [*struck*: love [&]] am not behind hand – therefore am greatly interested in the above particulars [*inserted*: the answer to the above Querys] – my dear Harry is well – he my [*struck*: dear] Sister is as when you [knew] him, the best and tenderest [*inserted*: of] friends, never were – two persons more happily united than we – we have a lively little girl, of whom I fear I [*inserted*: we] [are too] [*struck*: fond] she is very like her gran mama – She looks vastly like [*inserted*: our] Mama – who I hope will one day see her – she will love her I am sure she will. I am going at last to take the small pox – more for the sake of my little Lucy than myself the Army and the country in general having been innoculated will make it dangerous for me to go from home without having had it – and in the present state of things I wish to be in such a situation – that I can go to all parts of America without danger. my Harry is not much at home – and [2] I do not like to from him – oh my Sister, how horrid is this war, Brother against Brother – and the parent against the child – who were the first promoters of it I know not but god knows – and I fear they will feel the weight of his vengeance – tis pity the little [*struck*: while] [*inserted*: time] we have to spend in this world – we cannot [*strikeout*] enjoy ourselves and our friends – but must be devising means to destroy each other – the art of killing has become a perfect science – that man is most esteemed who has the best knack, at destroying the human species – in our juvenile days my Hannah we little thought – this Barbaras art would

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so soon have reached America – but [*inserted: alas*] her fruitfull fields [*struck: have become the scene*] of war [*struck: and destruction*] [*struck: Battles taxes*] been covered with the dead and dying [*inserted: oh the heartfelt*] – the grief their sister and brothers [*inserted: must have*] suffered [*struck: can never be told*]

but enough of this god send a speedy issue to this war and give us a happy meeting is the sincere wish and prayer of her who thro all the changing scenes of life never will cease to be your affectionate friend and sister

LK

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