

Poe, Orlando M. My Dear Nelly: The Selected Civil War Letters of General Orlando M. Poe to His Wife Eleanor. Edited by Paul Taylor. Kent, Oh.: Kent State University Press, 2020.

One of the most important engineers of the Civil War, born in Ohio in 1832, farm, Whig, West Point class of 1856, antislavery, topographical engineer, Great Lakes Survey, wife was Eleanor Carroll Brent Poe—born in 1843; collection shows great importance of letters; ambitious for promotion and often complained; Sherman greatly helped advance Poe’s career; introduction is a bit disjointed).

Poe often expresses strong opinions but does not necessarily elaborate—average general letters

Grand Haven, Michigan, 12  
Engagement to his future wife, 13  
Marriage, 14-15  
Sermon, 15  
Letters, 16  
Wide Awakes, 16  
Zachariah Chandler, 16  
Secret service, 20  
Secession and treason, 20  
Volunteers, 20  
McClellan, 21  
Offered colonelcy in two different regiments, McClellan’s staff, 22-23  
Quite excited about his prospects, 23-24—quote in review perhaps  
Secret duty in the South, 22  
Western Virginia, safety committee, 26-27  
Tavern, 29  
Wheeling, 30  
Acerbic comments about women at a dinner, 33  
Ambition tied to McClellan, 33-34  
Confederate depredations in Ohio, 35  
Western Virginia, 36  
Grafton, 37ff  
Indiana troops, Patterson’s Creek, 40  
Secessionist relatives released, 42  
Expects a battle soon, 43  
Changeable opinions in western Virginia, geographical advantages to the enemy, 44  
Rich Mountain, 45-50  
General Garnett killed, Pegram, 51  
People paying little attention to army in western Virginia, 52  
McClellan staff, 53  
Bull Run, 53  
McClellan order against officer loitering in Washington, 53  
Congress, 54  
Escort for Nelly coming to Washington, 55-56

2nd Michigan Infantry, 56  
Board of examination of officers, 59  
Monitor, 60  
Suggests she should perhaps leave Washington since the city has grown so bad, 61  
Baltimore and Washington too disorderly, wants wife to go Ohio, 62-63  
Peninsula campaign, Yorktown, weather, 65  
Has heard that Heintzelman disapproves of his appointment as brigadier general, 69  
Sentimentality, 70  
Soldier pay, 70-71  
Torpedoes, 71-72  
Williamsburg, brags on the brigade, 72-73  
McClellan does give his men enough credit for Williamsburg, 74-76  
Confident after Norfolk and destruction of the Merrimac, 74-75  
Seven Pines, Fair Oaks, 77-79  
Illness, 78  
Harrison's Landing, 81  
Accused of being a secessionist at the War Department, 83  
Kearny recommends Poe's promotion to general, 83  
Kearny ordered Poe arrested and then released, 85  
Conscription, 86  
Second Bull Run campaign, 87  
Kearny, 87  
Cavalryman killed a citizen, Poe wishes he could order a summary execution, 88  
Army of Virginia not as well disciplined as Army of the Potomac, 88  
Morale, 89-90  
Brigadier general appointment, 91  
Under arrest, 92  
General Birney, promotion, 92-93  
Dismissal of junior officers, 94  
Rumors of fighting, illness, 96-97  
Antietam, 98  
Nurse, Detroit hospital, 99  
Need recruits to fill up old regiments, 103  
Alcohol, officious junior officer, 103  
Few Unionists in Maryland, 104  
Indignant about still not have a generalship, 105  
Army of the Potomac moving, fall 1862, 106  
Fredericksburg, 108ff  
Anxious to fight but opposes the plan—interest observation, 110  
Battle of Fredericksburg, 111-12  
Suffering "severe mental strain" 111-13  
Morale low, 113  
Leave, journey back to the army, 114ff  
Commanding a division, presidential appointment as brigadier general, 116  
Troop review, women present, 118  
Congress turns down general nomination and Poe reduced to a lieutenant, engineers, 120

He did not go to church so he could write to her, 122  
 Gives her instructions on handling a hotel bill, 123  
 Marching, sunstroke, 124-25  
 Burnside, 126  
 Impressed by suffering and sacrifices of Tennessee Unionists, 127  
 East Tennessee, Burnside, Knoxville, campaign, 127ff  
 Confederate deserters, 130  
 Unionism in Knoxville, 131-31  
 Confederate money, 132  
 Often describes local women to his wife in a teasing manner, 133, 141  
 Conscription, evasions, 134  
 Confederate letters, 134  
 Slave cook well treated but ran away, 135  
 Telford, soldiers from 100th Ohio infantry captured, 136  
 Attended Episcopal Church, 137  
 Very particular about his books and bookcase, 137  
 Letters, 138  
 Rumors, 140  
 Trouble with his mother-in-law, 142  
 Rumors, 142-43  
 Rumors from Rosecrans, 144  
 Young women and riding parties, 144  
 Cryptic statement about sources of his troubles, 146  
 Hartsuff leave of absence, 147  
 Invited to ride with young women, 147  
 Letters, 148  
 Eleanor pregnant, 149  
 Woman came to help the wounded even though her own son had just been killed, Blue Springs, 149-50, 154  
 1863 elections in Ohio and Pennsylvania, 153  
 Speaking by Horace Maynard and Parson Brownlow, 155  
 Burnside places great confidence in his judgment, 156  
 Evacuation of Loudon, pontoons, 158  
 Writes to his wife about his mothers urgings, 161  
 Daily building pontoon bridges, 163  
 Burnside suggested the Poes might use a cipher in writing to each other, 164, 169  
 Union forces defeated at Rogersville, 165  
 Hates to write to her sarcastic mother, 166  
 Young woman, 167  
 Charles A. Dana, “gentry” “prying into things” 168  
 Longstreet, now surrounded by Confederates, 170  
 Siege of Knoxville, gaining much credit for his own work, 172ff  
 Assault on Fort Sanders, 173-74  
 Edward Porter Alexander, truce, alcohol, 174  
 Might not mind a few “honorable wounds,” 175  
 “our success thus far is attributed to me.” May be worth a second star, 176

Success means destroying proudest corps of Confederate army, Longstreet, 177  
“my praises are in every man’s mouth,” 178  
Newspaper correspondents promise to say great things about him, 178  
Baldy Smith, 183  
Soldier pay, 184  
Eastern and western generals similar, 186  
Worries about her reputation if she lives in a hotel in Detroit, 187-88  
Still hoping for some position with Army of the Potomac, 190  
Sanitary Commission, 192  
Their son, she seems happier, 193-94  
Concerned about defeats in Florida and cavalry in Mississippi, 195  
Faith in Sherman, 195  
Expects Baldy Smith to command Army of the Potomac. 196  
Does believe rumor of Mobile being captured, 196  
Chattanooga, 198-99  
Baldy Smith, major general, 199-200  
Fears that Grant and Baldy Smith may be doing another Peninsula campaign, 202  
Photographs, Sherman, 203-4  
Asked to be remembered to members of the 2nd Michigan, 205  
Chief engineer for Sherman, 205  
Atlanta campaign, 222ff  
Ringgold, 212-13  
Catoosa Springs, 213  
Tunnel Hill, Buzzard’s Roost, 215  
Resaca, 216-19  
Nearly shot, 219  
Successful operations so far, 221  
Short snippets on Atlanta campaign, 221  
Great desolation, 222  
Dallas, 222  
Taken much notice of babies, 223  
Grant and McClellan, 224, 227  
Dallas, Georgia, 224-25  
Desolation, thieves and pillagers in the army, 227  
Ackworth, Georgia, 227  
Young women, 229  
Lonesome and interest in war is gone, 230  
Pine Mountain, 232  
Could use more detail about his engineering work in the Atlanta campaign  
Kennesaw Mountain, women on Kennesaw, 234  
Kennesaw Mountain, 235  
Photographs, 236  
Cypher communications, 237  
Dead soldiers, burial, 237  
Chase resignation, gold prices, 238  
Marietta, looking into Atlanta with a glass, 239

Artillery fire, 239-40  
 Progress of movements, toward Atlanta, 240  
 Marietta, 240-41  
 Men crossing river entirely naked, 241-42  
 Voted for Buchanan and Bell and determined to never vote again, Copperheads, loyalty, 242  
 Newspaper and Kennesaw Mountain, 244  
 Crossed Chattahoochee, 245  
 Battles for Atlanta, 246-48  
 Atlanta campaign objectives, 250-51  
 Sends home map of battles, 252-53, 262  
 Tells her to leave politics, especially the Order of American Knights, alone, 253  
 He is fighting for his country and not for Lincoln or the Republican party, 253  
 Railroad destruction, 255  
 Opposes war against civilians, 256  
 Taken possession of Atlanta, 257  
 Atlanta described, 260  
 McClellan nomination, wants her to say nothing about politics, 260-61  
 Evacuation of Atlanta, 261  
 Working on fortifications, 262  
 Property at home, 263  
 English woman, 265  
 Notes his position as chief engineer of the army, 266  
 Praises his wife's independent character, 267  
 Love letter, 268  
 Picture of Sherman and staff, 269  
 Remains in Atlanta, 271  
 Rumors, Allatoona Pass, Corse, 271-72  
 Supply lines, 271-72  
 Communications, 274  
 Does not want her to come to Atlanta, 275  
 Photograph, 275  
 Letters, 277  
 Photographs, 277-78  
 Election day, 280  
 Atlanta, November 1864, skirmish in front of the works, 281  
 March to the Sea, 283ff  
 Savannah, 284  
 Starving people in Savannah, 286  
 Christmas, 287-88  
 Oath, 288  
 Letters, 290-91  
 Sherman wants him, 292  
 His work is here, he cannot come home and is doing good service, 294  
 Stanton, 295  
 Received three brevets and is proud of this, 295  
 Optimistic about coming campaign in the Carolinas, 296

Burned letters from her, 299  
Pocotaligo, 300-1  
Marching, 302  
Destroying Fayetteville arsenal, 302-3  
Engagements with Johnston's Confederates, 305  
Goldsboro, North Carolina, 305ff  
Bentonville, 307  
Fears more carnage and death, 309  
Tobacco, 311  
Fall of Richmond, 311  
Confederate cause hopeless, seems like murder to kill any more men, 312  
Duty, 313  
Raleigh, 314  
Lincoln assassination, Sherman and Johnston, 315  
Peace, Sherman and Johnston, 316-17  
Discipline of their son, 318  
Rejection of Sherman's terms with Johnston, 318-20