"Very Much Attached to Tampa": The Civil War-Era Letters of Catharine Campbell Hart 1860 and 1865

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The lives and experiences of women at Tampa during the Civil War era have been neglected by the city’s chroniclers. Relatively few original accounts have become available since the Work Projects Administration’s Federal Writer’s Project interviewed a few survivors during the 1930s. Fortunately, several decades ago the late Dena E. Snodgrass of Jacksonville, a past president of the Florida and Jacksonville Historical Societies, purchased from a New Jersey dealer and preserved a small collection of the letters of Ossian B. and Catharine S. Hart. Among the collection’s contents were five letters written by Catharine Hart from Tampa. They carried dates of February 8, April 22, September 4, and November 30, 1860, and January 5, 1865.

Catharine Hart’s experiences in south Florida during the 1840s through 1865 involved trials and tragedy intertwined with romance and remarkable achievement. Born at Newark, New Jersey, in 1823, her family background was that of sea captains and middle class merchants. Then, in 1843 she married Ossian B. Hart, a young lawyer and second son of Jacksonville’s founder Isaiah D. Hart. They had made each other’s acquaintance when she sojourned for her health in Hart’s hometown in 1841.

The Hart marriage faced challenges from its inception. The young couple first attempted to pioneer the Fort Pierce area, but their home and groves were destroyed by the great hurricane of 1846. The Harts’ fortunes slowly rebounded after the couple relocated to Key West. While building a legal practice, Ossian also achieved legislative election as solicitor (district attorney) of the Southern Judicial Circuit in 1849 and served until 1853. He enjoyed Key West life, but Kate felt quite differently about the matter. As a fervent Presbyterian, she abhorred Key West’s easygoing ways, a situation that manifested itself eventually in prolonged health problems.

Relief arrived for Kate in early 1857. Late the previous year Ossian’s longtime mentor, Tampa mayor and former circuit judge Joseph B. Lancaster, died. Within months Ossian and Kate moved to the isolated village, where he assumed Lancaster’s law practice. After a short time in temporary quarters, they purchased a home on the northeast corner of Lafayette (now Kennedy) and Pierce Streets, a part of the block upon which the present Hillsborough County courthouse rests. Kate’s health immediately improved, and, as her letters demonstrate, she found happiness in Tampa. The Harts remained there through most of the trying Civil War years, a period during
which Ossian emerged as the region’s leading Unionist.

Catharine’s surviving Tampa letters record her activities and states of mind during the months before secession and just as the Civil War, which had become bitter in south Florida, was grinding to a halt. They illustrate a mood swing from optimism about Tampa and life generally through fears of the coming crisis to despair. In the process, they permit us a look at this northern-born woman’s sentiments regarding slavery, abolitionism, and the destruction of the Union, as well as Tampa’s remoteness, the daily life of a homemaker and slave mistress, and the heartache of families divided. The letters take on special significance because, in the Civil War’s aftermath, Catharine’s husband would found Florida’s Republican party, sit as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of Florida, and serve, beginning January 1873 until his death in March 1874, as the state’s first native-born governor.

The letters are presented below in their original form, with one major exception. Typically for an era when postage and paper were expensive, Catharine crowded each letter into a shorter space by writing it essentially as a single paragraph. For clarity, the text presented here has been paragraphed. The first four letters are addressed to Kate’s sister, Charlotte (or Lottie) Campbell. The final one was written for her widowed mother Deborah Conger Campbell, her sisters Lottie and Emma Campbell, and her brother Charles G. Campbell, all at Newark.

Two additional notes. First, Kate’s letters make numerous references to her friend Lou. She had met Louisa Browne in Key West during the mid-to-late 1840s. Lou married there to merchant John W. Porter, who also held office as Key West’s mayor. He died in late 1856, though, leaving her destitute. In the circumstances she soon moved with her children Hayden and Mary to Tampa. The three Porters lived with the Harts. Also, Jesse Carter employed Lou as teacher in his small school held in the Historical School House, now located on the campus of the University of Tampa and home to the DeSoto Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. Second, Kate utilizes certain words and terms that were in common use at Tampa when her letters were written but which modern readers may find offensive. While any such result is regretted, the words and terms remain in the text as presented here in order to maintain the credibility of the Hart letters as historical documents.

Tampa Feb. 8th 1860

Dearest Lottie:

Your last kind letter was received in due time after leaving your pen, but I have been on the qui vive of expectation for some time past; and was beginning to feel very uneasy lest some thing had happened to one of you. But your Letter dear Lottie came to my relief and again am I happy in the knowledge that all is well with you, and that you are enjoying yourselves so much in meeting your old friends, schoolmates, and relations, affords me pleasant reflections.

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How much I wish I was with you, But tis useless to sigh for what is beyond our reach. He who is contented with what Providence bestows, possesses great and increasing wealth. I am sorry you decided not to pay me a visit,
although I know it would be expensive and fatigueing[;] still my heart would hope, against my better judgment, for what it so anxiously desired.

I have been talking to Ossian about my going home next summer, but he does not say much about it; I fear he thinks I had better stay at home. Our negrow woman Susannah expects to be confined in June or July and will need some one to take care of her. And then there is Lou and her children, if I were gone she would not think it exactly proper to stay here alone with Ossian, and if she left here she would find much trouble to get as comfortable a boarding house and as cheap as we have been doing. I would like very much indeed to meet you at Savannah and go on together, but I fear it cannot be and I have not seen Oby in so long a time and his wife and children never.6 I would enjoy it very much, and have enjoyed the anticipation, although I do not expect to realize my waking dreams.

And then here are my chickens ducks pigs horses; all daily requiring my care; and experience has proved that when the cats away the mice will play, and in the mean time who takes care of the house and yard. I can assure you in our southern homes, the mistress is a very important personage, although she does not actually labor with her own hands, still she must do the head work and her presence is necessary to the faithful performance thereof.

The various members of our household are all in good health at present, including horses cows pig (which by the way expects to be confined very soon) chickens and darkies. Lou has been suffering with a very severe cold in her head, but is better now; her school is in a flourishing condition and her prospects very flattering for the future.

I am very happy to inform you our town is improving some what. We have a literary club of which Ossian is president.7 We have also a glee club, composed of all the principal ladies and gents of the town.8 Lou and I are members and enjoy going very much, and[,] as the object of the society is the improvement of our vocal powers[,] we are more or less benefited by it. We have also a new minister for the Methodist church; one in good health and quite intelligent and a tolerable good preacher,9 and in addition we have had some very interesting marriages and have several more on the tapis [under consideration], one to night; who knows but Tampa may yet win for herself a name.10 We have also an ice house nearly completed and we expect ere our warm weather commences to have it filled and ready to administer to our comfort in this sunny clime.11

Now Lottie dear dont think I want to censure you for I do not. I know you have with in your bosom as fond and loving affections for your kindred as any one living, and you love our Mother quite as well as any of us and you have her always with you, while I have been separated a great many years. Is it strange then that I should feel some disappointment on getting
a good long letter from one of the family circle, to find no eagerly looked for word from her who gave me birth, whome I have loved in my absence from her with a daughters affection, untill that love is a part of my existance. When you write tell me all and every thing about her. is she much changed since I saw her last, has she more wrinkles upon her brow, has care there stamped its unerring seal[J change is the certain doom of all things in nature, but a Mothers love that is Heven born and with stands the inroads of time absence and death itself.

Tell Ma I so often think of her and wish for her, while eating our nice vegetables on which we are now luxuriating. We have green peas in abundance cabbage turnips, new Irish potatoes carrots beets radishes onions and sweet potatoes all the year round, in great abundance. We raise them upon our own land and feed them freely to horses pigs cows and every thing that will eat them, particularly Little ngars. Tell Mama my flowers grow astonishingly, I have twenty or more rose cuttings sprouted, and a very pretty variety of other flowers such as pinks geraniums, crape myrtle, woodbine, honey suckel &c. And it is a very great source of pleasure to me to watch them unfold their leaves and expand into beautiful trees.

Flower culture is becoming a passion with me. I used to engage in it a few years back, more as a duty than a pleasure because I felt my health required exercise in the open air, and my mind occupations and diversion from its self, but now that my health is good, very much improved indeed, the incentive is not the same but the interest I take much deeper and more substantial; now I love to nurse watch and tend them because my heart is gratified by the silent homage they return me for my care, and in nursing them I am learning lessons of humility faith love dependence on Him who cloths the Lillies of the field.

I believe I have not written you since we made our visit to Key West. We had a very pleasant time indeed[,] all our old friends were very glad to see us, and loaded us with invitations to tea to spend the day and thus every moment of our time was taken up. We were there nearly a week, and did get through with all our calls and invitations. Lou also had a fine time, she and the children had many presents given them. We spent Christmas there, were very sea sick going over and coming back, and quite glad to get home again. We are only 24 hours going and the same coming back, a fine large steamer with good accomodations.12

I am very much attached to Tampa, like it better as time advances. I never before in all my married life felt so well content and happy in my house as I do now. I feel the force of that beautiful poetry every day of my life. Truly "There is no place like home, be it ever so humble."

I was very much interested in the description you gave of Sister Abbeys family, and more particularly my little name sake, how much I want to see her, she must be a dear sweet little pet.13 do give her a
squease and a kiss for me. I wanted to send her something for Christmas and hoped to find something pretty at K[eyl W[est]], but as the stores had all been burnt down I could not find any thing.14 give my love to Abby and all her family, and all our cousins, and I have not got room to say anything more, do write me soon, tell Em I am looking for one from her every day.15 If she will write me I will answer immediately and tell you the ballance of what I want to say now. love to Oby and family and to your self and Em the same share of affection from your

Sister Kate

In the spring of 1860 Kate’s sisters Charlotte and Emma toured the southeast, including a visit to Macon, Georgia. On April 22, Kate wrote them there in response to a letter from Lottie dated twelve days previously.

Tampa April 22d 1860

Dear Sister Lottie

Your last very kind letter dated April 10, from Macon, informing me of your safe arrival among our friends and your first introduction to the sunny South is now before me. It rejoices me to hear you are all so well pleased with this our beautiful Southern home. I wish O so much you could visit Florida my adopted home[,] the birth place of him who is so dear to me, and whom you all admire and love; were I living in Jacksonville now, how easy you could come and see me; but a few weeks would not do for me. I want a whole winter if ever you do come.

I live hoping I may some day realize my dream; I know Ma would enjoy the flowers and many other pleasant things peculiar to the south, now you and Em will have an opportunity to learn something of slavery by personal observation, and I want you to look all around, with eyes wide open, and see if you can find any of the horrid bug bears pictured by the abolitionists of the north; take notes if you do, and give me the bennefit of your observations. I am glad you have come south although I feel badly, to know you are so near me and cannot have a visit from you, still you will be glad on your return home that you came, and will have many pleasant recollections connected with your visit south, on reviewing your wanderings....

Ossian has been quite unwell lately which is some thing so unusual for him I scarcely know what to make of it.16 he has been troubled with gravel, and is now under the Doc[tor's] care for it; has had several spells of very severe pain, which nothing relieves but morphine;--he sends heaps of love to you and Em and Ma, and says he will write to her soon....

Do dear Lottie write me soon again. I am so glad always to hear from either of you; you dont know the pleasure it gives. Mrs. P[orter] and children are all well and join me in much love to Ma[,] Em and your self and believe me ever your loving sister
By the late summer of 1860 Kate’s earlier optimism and sunny disposition had begun to wither. Her husband continued to ail as he pursued a prolonged business trip through Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana. Meanwhile, hot summer weather and household cares drained her energy.

Tampa Sept 14th 1860

Dearest Lottie

Your kind letter, though long looked for, came at last and cheered my lonely anxious heart more than I can find words to express. Ossian is away from home, has been absent nearly two months, and when at Jacksonville was taken sick with Billious Fever, was quite sick[-]confined to his bed a week, but fortunately he was at his Father’s and had the best care and medical attention; but still he missed me; you know when one is sick there is no place like home, and this makes me feel very uneasy about him.

I expect him back on the 19th of this month by our New Orleans Steamer. he is now probably at Mobile, he has been taking quite a business tour, through Florida and then across the country to Alabama; he generally enjoys good health; he does not bear sickness with a good grace; but I hope all is now well with him, and permit him to return in safety to his home and thus fill the heart of his loving wife with gratitude to Him, who suffereth not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His notice....

I weigh one hundred and thirty and often find my flesh very much in my way and I often see my self growing so much like Ma in size and I imagine I look like her in the face; tis a comfort to hear Ma is so well contended and happy in the dear old spot she has for so many years looked upon as her home; tis natural and perhaps tis well. I am glad to hear her health is so good; And Abby and Obe have given up coming on this summer, do you know Lottle I had made up my mind to come on and meet them, had they paid you a visit, but since they have decided not to come this season, unless sickness should compell me, I shall wait until next summer; then I hope to see you all and enjoy a reunion, and exchange of pleasant memories, and affectionate associations; very dear to my heart; from those my heart so fondly loves. Oh Lottie when I begin to think about you all, and the long time since I look[ed] upon your faces I get so home sick I feel I cannot wait another year, and then there are Charleys dear little children[;] I am all impatient to see them.18

But situated as I am tis very difficult for me to leave home. Susannah has now a young baby about three months old and our family is large and our work is heavy and she would get a long badly with no head to manage for her; Negroes are very good to perform hard labor, but they have no management about them. Lou is now enjoying her vacation, will commence teaching again the
first of October, her health is very delicate. the children are well.

I have not been feeling well for the past month, and have thought that a trip north would benefit me very much, more than Docs advise or horse back exercise or anything else. were it only to stay a short time, and see you all and get a breath of your cool embracing air. our summer has been intensely hot. I have felt the heat more this summer than ever before, and I feel it has debilitated my system....

Sept 17th

Dear Lottie two days have passed since I wrote the first part of this letter, and now I have resumed my pen hoping I will be able to finish it before I lay it down. I have been thinking as the time is fast approaching when our merchants get their fall supply of goods, and in consequence vessels will be coming direct from New York to this place, a fine opportunity offers for me to get some things out which I want very much, and which you could so easily send me; one small keg of pickles; some ten or 12 lbs preserved peaches; a new bonnet-a barrel of first rate apples; if I could ascertain when the vessel would sail[,] where they lay[,] who are their agents[,] and all about it in time for you to purchase the things and get them on board, I would be glad to send on the money for you to get them, and could they come out to us fresh and good they would be such a treat we would enjoy eating them so much and think of you all at home. I do wish so much we lived nearer you all, so that we might more conveniently communicate our wants and wishes, and then we might exchange visits also, which would give me so much pleasure.

I have now a young lady friend of mine from Key West spending some time with us, and we are enjoyed it very much. her name is Emma Johnson[,] sister to Phely [Ophelia] Johnson[-] if you will refer back to some of Ossian’s funny productions you will find her name mentioned in connection with an old bonnet. this is her sister and a very clever girl she is. they both stayed with me a good deal when I was living in Key West.

I wish as much we were living in Jacksonville. there they have vessels out very often, and I see by the papers they are about establishing a line of Steam Ships to run between Jacksonville and New York which will be a great convenience. I cannot but hope some day we may be comfortably located at J. and then I shall have the pleasure of your society occasionally in the winter season; would it not be delightful; it would to me.

I had almost forgotten to tell you, Mrs Hart and daughter Julia, now a widow, Mrs Spear[,] is in New York. Mrs Hart is in very bad health, has gone on for the purpose of consulting a doctor she has been recommended to for her disease, which is cancer. She I know would be very much pleased to have you all call on her, and it would be a gratification to Ossian also; the Docs South say she cannot get well, but
Col Hart sent her on hoping some thing might be done to prolong her life, if she cannot be cured. She has been a great sufferer for the past two or three years, and is an altered woman from what she was. She and her husband get along much better than they did; he says he would give all he is worth if she could be cured; I do not know her address. When Ossian returns I will get him to write you and give it, and if you can make it convenient to call, I will be much obliged to you....

Now Lottie dear don’t you think this [is] time for me to stop scribling. I fear you will be tired reading if I am not tired writing, do write me soon again please. I am so glad to get your letters, if they do make me homesick. I have not said all yet, but must close with love to all from your loving but unworthy Sister Kate.

War clouds loomed on the horizon when Catharine next penned a letter to Lottie Campbell. In early November Abraham Lincoln had been elected as the nation’s first Republican president, prompting calls for dissolution of the Union throughout the South. Uncertainty gripped the nation. South Carolinians maneuvered toward secession, and the nation’s leadership proved ineffective in resolving the crisis.

Tampa Nov. 30th 1860

Dear Sister Lottie

This morning before I was dressed I received your truly welcome letter. I was beginning to feel quite anxious, you had been silent so long; fearing ma or one of you were sick. I do get so anxious if I do not hear often from you; and had made up my mind this morning as I was getting out of bed to write to you by the next mail....

I hope to visit you next summer but we do not know what is before us. Secession now agitates the entire South; they are calling public meetings in our portion of Country; we had a very spirited one here last Monday night, to which the Ladies were invited; and attended to[o], in large numbers. Lou and I went to hear what they could say; Ossian, as yet is not in favour of secession, but if Florida follows South Carolinas lead, which is very probable, we will go with her and share her fate. I do so much wish those Snarling bull dog Abolitionist[s] Horace Greely and Tom Bennet could be shut; they have done more and are doing more every day to exasperate the South than any thing else[.]

South Carolina seems to be in earnest; and I fear will act without mature deliberation; the others of the Cotton States advise waiting and let a convention decide what is to be done, which seems to me to be the best way to prevent premature measures; in opposition to our government. We feel badly on this subject, and fear for our country. Will there not a man be raised suited for the times, can we not hope for a Washington, a Webster or a Clay to open a way for us and pour oil upon the troubled waters, and save this Union still to be the admiration of the world; as they have done in years long past. Although we as Southerners Sympathize with the South, still we hope to see the difficulties settled without a
dissolution of the Union. I will send you our weekly paper that you may form an idea of how the people feel in our section of Country.

The first part of this I wrote two or three nights ago, by a dim light and feeling very tired. On looking at it to day I feel ashamed to send it; and feel I ought to write it all over, but reflecting on your generous heart and the indulgence you have heretofore exersized towards me, and my limited time from household cares, I have gone on and must now throw it all before you and beg your clemency.

Like many others who have lived and died before me, I do every thing in a big hurry. Lottie you can scarcely imagine how much I look like Ma, since I have been in better health, I have increased in flesh until I weigh 130 pounds and in size am almost as large as our Mother. My dresses are all tight and uncomfortable and I cant make them fit like I used to. You wrote me some time since you were growing fleshy, but you cant come up to me I know; Ossian weighs 230 lbs. Is he not a monster? but as his goodness corresponds with his size we can over look the former in admiration of the latter. he is still at Key West23 and I miss him so much these cold nights, we are now having quite cold weather for us; and large wood fires feel comfortable.

You say Ma has some preserves for me. I am glad to hear it and stand in need of them, but how long will it be ere I have the pleasure of tasting them. Christmas is close at hand and we are all preparing a Christmas box. There are many things you could send me if it were not for the trouble of getting them on board of a vessel. there are frequently vessels from NY to Key West and we have Steamers running between here and Key West every week;-if you wish to send any thing to me, leave it at Benner & Deakes in N York to be sent by the first vessel to Key West, and they will soon be sent over here. Send me the preserves as soon as possible and ask Ma to either make me or buy a nice large fruit cake and send me. We seldom can get the materials here for making them and I think I would enjoy one from home very much, and if it could get here by Christmas or even New Years it would be very pleasant and we would enjoy it very much[.]

I will send you a 2.50 gold piece; if I can get it. I have plenty of bills but they will not pass with you now. and send me any thing else you choose, a box from home full of good things would be quite exceptable; a lb or 2 of broken candy for the children also would be nice, get any thing you think we would like and I will bear all expense; you speak of a bonnet, the bonnets they are wearing now are to[o] ugly for me. Our merchants have brought several out and [they are] aboml [abominable?]. Pokes they are called; and Pokes they are; I have been wearing mine over a year now, and shall wear it untill next summer if I go home; if not I will send to Savannah or Charleston and get one.

Please Lottie send me as soon as possible the pattern of the Rabbit
made of Canton Flannel. I want to make some for Christmas, answer this very soon and sent the pattern.....

Kate

The fears for her country that Kate expressed in her letter of November 30, 1860, proved well founded. On December 20 South Carolina seceded, followed on January 9, 1861, by Mississippi. The next day Florida acted, as well. Soon the nation had plunged into civil war. The worst of the conflict did not touch south Florida until early 1864. When it did, though, the region split, with pro-Union men taking up arms against those who sided with the Confederacy. The resulting violence divided families, destroyed property, and created lasting legacies of bitter resentment.

For most of the war, the Harts lived in Tampa, particularly during its last two years. As a leader of the area's Unionists, Ossian endured hurtful trials. Catharine stood forthrightly by his side. Still, the war's costs depressed her, sentiments that she expressed eloquently when an opportunity was afforded to her early in 1865 to contact her family in the North.

Tampa Jan 5th 1865

My dear Mother, Sisters & Brothers

A good opportunity offering I embrace it to write to you a few lines, and let you know we are still in the land of the living, and in the enjoyment of good health, and have not forgotten the many warm hearts beating for us far away, and we have been very anxious to hear from you all. I wrote you in my last to direct [mail] to me by way of Key West, but I have not received a line for many months, and cannot but feel anxious to hear from you, and know how you are getting along through these troublesome times. God grant you may all be well, and spared to each other. I hope Charley and Obey have not been compelled to go in the army. I know of course their love for the Union would naturally lead them to do so, but I know also, they are not fighting men, and such business would be repugnant to their natures.

I do so long to see you all once again; and to mingle with you all, as in days past, but when will that day come again; when will this unnatural war be over, when will peace and prosperity bless our distressed country again. This the fourth year has dawned upon us; and still the two sections of country stand in antagonism toward each other. Sometimes I am led to think God has forsaken us, and intends to let us destroy each other; wickedness of all kinds prevails, on the right hand and on the left-

We still have our home here, and enjoy its comforts much more than thousands. Ossian is in good health and home with us. he is engaged at the present in making salt, and supplying the necessities of the people; sends much love to them when you see them. and how is Luly and Jeannice and Charley and all the rest of the little ones, and how is Mary and her children, do write me soon. I want to hear from all but I want to see you all more, and write me how Ma bears her increasing years; and how Em and Lottie look, feel, and what their prospects are for
the future; are you both to be old maids; one of you should get married; do write soon. You cannot imagine how much pleasure it would give us to hear from you all. give much love to Dealia and Charley and all my friends and a large share for yourself, from the ever loving heart of your daughter & Sister

Kate S. Hart

The Harts remained at Tampa for only a short time following the Civil War’s end. By early 1866 they had relocated to Jacksonville where Ossian began building a legal practice, supplemented by work for the Freedmen's Bureau. In 1867 he helped to found Florida’s Republican party. The next year he became an associate justice of the state supreme court, and in 1873 assumed the governorship. Ossian B. Hart died at his Jacksonville home, with his wife present, on March 18, 1874.27

During the post-Civil War era, Kate lived in their Jacksonville home, caring for her young ward Flora A. Henderson, the daughter of Tampa’s John A. Henderson. After Ossian’s death, she struggled financially. During 1883-1886 Kate served as postmistress at Kissimmee. Otherwise, she split her time between Jacksonville and Morristown, New Jersey, where her sisters Charlotte and Emma Campbell had settled. Catharine Hart died at Morristown on October 9, 1897. While noting that "her life may be said to have been spent in doing good to others," an obituary added, "The early days of her marriage to Mr. Hart were filled with much romance, and they underwent many trials and hardships in the unsettled condition of the state." It concluded, "She has but been called to the reward that awaits her in another and better world."28

ENDNOTES

1 See, for example, “Mrs. Anne Givens Harrison” in "Hillsborough County Personalities" (Jacksonville: Federal Writer’s Project, 1937). Probably the most-substantial woman’s account to become available subsequent to the 1930s has been Maria Louisa Daegenhardt Archer’s reminiscences, which are held in the collection of the Historical Association of Southern Florida, Miami. Portions of several of the available women’s reminiscences have been published in Kyle S. VanLandingham, "The Union Occupation of Tampa, May 6-7, 1864," Sunland Tribune 19 (November 1993), 9-16. For women’s experiences, generally, in the Tampa Bay area during the mid-1800s, see Doris Weatherford, A History of Women in Tampa (Tampa, 1991), and Canter Brown, Jr., Women on the Tampa Bay Frontier (Tampa, 1997).

2 The Ossian and Catharine Hart letters are contained in the Dena E. Snodgrass Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. One Catharine Hart letter, written from Key West and dated November 29, 1852, described her experiences riding the Tampa-area judicial circuit with her lawyer husband. It was printed in Canter Brown, Jr., "'Very Hard to Bear'; Florida’s Future First Lady Catharine Hart Travels the Southern Judicial Circuit in 1852," Sunland Tribune 22 (November 1996), 87-91.

3 On Ossian and Catharine Hart's story, see Canter Brown, Jr., Ossian Bingley Hart, Florida’s Loyalist Reconstruction Governor (Baton Rouge, 1997). Biographical details used in this article are contained there, with references to original and secondary sources.


5 Charlotte Thibon Campbell, born September 2, 1835; died January 19, 1912. Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Records, Newark, NJ.

6 Oby (sometimes Obe or Obey) was Kate’s brother, Joseph Obediah Campbell, who was two years her senior and lived in 1860 in New Jersey. Maxine Crowell Leonard, The Conger Family in America (Janesville, IA, 1972), 712.
7 Tampa’s literary club was founded in December 1859. Fernandina East Floridian, January 5, 1860.

8 The Tampa Glee Club met on Monday evenings under the tutelage of young English musician J. A. Butterfield. Ibid., February 11, 18, 1860.

9 In early 1860 the Reverend Oscar A. Myers replaced an ailing John W. Timberlake as minister of Tampa’s Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Timberlake, who had begun pastoring in Tampa during 1858, would die in Virginia on May 15, 1862. Myers, a Pensacola native, previously had served as Leon County’s clerk of the circuit court and as private secretary to Governor William D. Moseley. He came to Tampa from the church at Fernandina. Tallahassee Floridian & Journal, December 26, 1857, January 14, 1860; Florida Genealogical Journal 19 (1983), 8; Tallahassee Florida Sentinel, February 8, 1853; Florida House Journal (1850), Appendix, 84.

10 At Tampa on February 8, 1860, William B. Henderson married Caroline Elizabeth Spencer. Tampa Florida Peninsular, February 11, 1860.


12 James McKay, Sr.,’s steamer James Gettis, formerly the Tampa, made a regular run from Tampa to Key West in early 1860. Tampa Florida Peninsular, March 24, 1860.

13 Kate’s sister Abby H. Campbell Smith was born October 1, 1815, and died in 1904. Leonard, Conger Family in America, 712.

14 Much of Key West’s business district burned in May 1859. Tampa Florida Peninsular, May 28, 1859.

15 Emma Campbell, born November 16, 1830, died February 25, 1919. Leonard, Conger Family in America, 712; Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Records, Newark, NJ.


17 Isaiah David Hart, Ossian’s father, helped to found the town of Jacksonville in 1822. By 1860 he had become one of the leading planters and businessmen in Florida. T Frederick Davis, History of Jacksonville, Florida, and Vicinity 1513 to 1924 (reprint ed., Jacksonville, 1990), 53-56; 1860 population, slave, and agricultural censuses, Duval County, FL.

18 Kate’s brother Charles G. Campbell was born February 8, 1825. He operated a glass, framing, and art business at Newark. Leonard, Conger Family in America, 712; Industries of New Jersey. Essex County including City of Newark (New York, 1882), 636.

19 According to Key West historian Jefferson B. Browne in 1912: “Mr. and Mrs. Charles Johnson lived for many years in a quaint old house on Whitehead, between Green and Caroline streets. They had three attractive daughters. Miss Emma married Dr. Sweet, Miss Louisa married Dr. Armstrong and Miss Ophella married Dr. Pickering, all of the United States marine hospital service. The family moved from Key West many years ago.” Jefferson B. Brown, Key West, The Old and the New (reprint ed., Gainesville, 1973), 192.

20 O. B. Hart’s mother Nancy Nelson Hart was born about 1800. She and Isaiah D. Hart married in 1818. Their daughter Julia arrived in 1834. On December 14, 1853, Julia married Dr. Algernon S. Speer of Orange County, with whom Ossian had served in the 1845 territorial house of representatives. A. S. Speer died in a steamboat explosion on Lake George in 1857. Hart Family Bibles (xerographic copies in State and Local History Collection, Hayden Burns Public Library, Jacksonville); Tallahassee Floridian & Journal, September 12, 1857; Brown, Ossian Bingley Hart.


22 Details of the November 26 secession meeting at Tampa are found in the December 1, 1860, issue of the Florida Peninsular.
23 O. B. Hart was attending the fall term of the Monroe County circuit court at the time this letter was written. Brown, Ossian Bingley Hart.


25 The reference is to Kate’s brothers Charles G. Campbell and Joseph Obadiah Campbell.

26 Exactly whose children Kate refers to here is unclear. Mary was her sister Mary C. Campbell, who was born October 12, 1813. Leonard, Conger Family in America, 712.

27 Brown, Ossian Bingley Hart.

28 Ibid.; Jacksonville Florida Times- Union & Citizen, October 14, 1897.