

# Civil War correspondence with relief board revealing

*Fort Mill's A.B. Springs headed agency, helped assist soldiers' families*

In the second year of the Civil War, the state of South Carolina created the Soldier's Relief Board, which was charged with caring for the families of the men at the front. Andrew Baxter Springs of Fort Mill was removed from military service in Virginia to head the agency.

Springs was allotted little money for the difficult task, but he took his duties seriously and called on a network of people he knew from across the state, largely because he had served in the legislature and was a leading stockholder in the cotton mills at Graniteville.

In York County, Springs supplemented his charge with money from his own pocket and food from his plantation commissary. As conditions worsened, Springs received more and more requests for help. Some of the soldiers' letters have survived as part of more than 4,500 letters and documents in the Springs Papers of the University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.

Sometimes soldiers wrote Springs about legal matters (Springs had studied law with Thomas J. Withers in Camden). On October 7, 1862, a neighbor, A.M. Kee, asked Springs to write him and "tell me whether John G. Withers Estate will come in for a share in old Jemima Withers Estate or not. Tell me all about it and give me your opinion."

Other times the soldiers asked for favors of a different sort. Leroy Armstrong, a neighbor of Baxter Springs, was in the Confederate Army and old enough to have sons also in service, though not in the same company of the father.

On May 24, 1862, Armstrong wrote Springs from Camp Man-

## NEARBY HISTORY

Louise Pettus



ter Springs sent him, telling of collecting \$150 of the Barber note. "I want you to pay it over to my wife and when you collect the balance let me no and I will send you a Receipt to settel that Debt with Patterson & White as my wife stands in need of the money worse than I do," he wrote.

In spite of occasional hot words in their wartime letters and instances when Springs could not solve their problems, York County soldiers said at the war's conclusion that they were supplied just as well as, or better than, soldiers from other regions - mostly because of the efforts of Baxter Springs of Springfield.

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On July 19, Leroy Armstrong wrote that he was now feeling well. "I am getting that fat I jerk the buttons off my shirt by throwing my arms about." And then: "I want you Pleas to see Turner Barber and collect that note if you have not collected it as I cant get to come home to see him my self."

On "the 4" 1862, Armstrong wrote again: "I seat my self this Evening to Drop you a few lines ... and hope you will Pleas let me no T Barber has settled that note or not ... I would like that you should collect it for me as I inlisted for the sake of the money."

"Barber is setting at home at his Ease and I am here undergoing all the hardships of this war and should like to have the money if you can git it out him pay your self out of it & pay the balance over to my wife."

On August 27, Leroy Armstrong was at Camp Lee Richmond when he responded to a let-