

September 7, 1956

Dear Claude:

Your letter of September 1st received and appreciated very much. First let me say that I certainly had a very enjoyable stay with you and Hazel. Our visits do not come often but they are always enjoyable.

Thanks very much for the long abstract from "The Negro in Virginia." I am well acquainted with this book and also own a copy. I have read quite a bit of it and enjoyed it very much. The references made by General Butler to Fort Powhatan at Wilson's Wharf, Virginia of course is the incident to which I referred regarding grandfather Berry's unit. You may recall that I mentioned, or rather that the photostat copies indicated that he fought in the 2nd Regiment of US Colored Light Artillery. The New York Times newspaper account of this battle in the spring of '64 is referred to either in the book which I am sending you direct from Brentano's, entitled "The Negro in the Civil War", or I read it in the earlier book on the Negro in the Civil War by Williams and published in the 1890's I believe. I will not take time to look up the accurate account at this moment since you have the story anyhow. I think I told you I wrote to the Pocahontas High School, which is a Negro school at Powhatan, Virginia, regarding the possible existence of old land marks of this fort and how it was discovered by the librarian of the school. They got quite a thrill out of it because they had no idea that such a thing existed before I called their attention to it. One of these days I plan to see the spot myself.

If you will look in the index of the "Negro In Virginia" I think you will find a reference to a Taylor's Farm. I have investigated this farm to considerable extent and I have found a cousin of my father's who is in the late seventies who was born on Taylor's Farm. My grandfather, John Berry, lived on this farm until the time when the Negroes were expelled in order to give the property back to the Confederate owners. You will see reference in this book to the fact that Negroes made a strong stand and had to be threatened by Federal troops before they gave up this farm. I have confirmed evidence from an eighty-five year old uncle and three or four other old residents of Hampton and New York to the effect that a party of people, including my grandfather, tore down the houses which they had built on Taylor's Farm, built rafts at the waterfront, and floated the lumber across Hampton Roads and into back river down to the site of Butler's Farm where they purchased land on which my father was born. That will be around near the old Shellbanks farm of Hampton Institute and near the present site of Langley Field.