

Roanoke Island N.C.
Feb. 20th 1864

Major Genl Benjm F. Butler

Dear Sir:

In a recent letter you ask about the sawmill.

The S. B. Bailey left Newbern Nov. 26th 1863 ordered to bring down the engine, saw and gristmill. She had a stormy passage, put into New York in distress, and made the port of Boston full a month after starting. She was there loaded by Capt McKim A.Q.M. and dispatched for Newbern Jan 17th 1864. At Hatteras Inlet she was ordered to Roanoke, and arrived here Feb. 17, 1864!

Such wretched delay is intolerable, and I should have been violently angry if it could do any good.

I am afraid my agent Mr Wm Perry did not push matters vigorously. He should have done so, for I agreed to pay him \$100. per month and expenses, and justly expected efficiency and dispatch. The elements have also seemed against us.

But we have a splendid engine, and one which is worth in the market today four thousand dollars more than it cost. I enclose to you a bill of the engine as made out by the company to which my honored Father belongs. I deposited the money with them as collected, Mr Perry drew upon them as he made the purchases, and they have allowed him to overdraw my cash deposits \$1456.80. This they did upon my representations that nothing essential to the efficiency of the machine should be omitted, and with the expectation that government will take it off my hands, and leave me in funds to pay off the loan.

We shall lose no time in getting up the mill though to crown our embarrassment my agent Mr. Perry is waiting, I learn, at Ft. Monroe, until it shall be safe to come down here! Brave man!

We have the timber all cut for the mill, and will get it into use as soon as our forces at work can perform the labor. The bill sent will not give you an idea of the cost of all the parts of the machinery. Mr Perry is to bring the bills which I will lay before you at an early day.

It is wonderful to me that our people on this island could build so many hundreds of comfortable houses without our asking the government for a foot of lumber. A few months running of our circular saws will make our colony a picture of beauty.

It is very healthy here, and unless this weather be very inclement the people do not suffer. Mr Streeter is ready to push the fisheries, getting his boats ready, and organizing gangs, but the nets do not yet come.

Capt. Wetherbee has received orders to act as A.Q.M. here, and A.A.Q.M. Kimball is closing up his business. Many are satisfied.

Estimates will soon be ready to forward respecting the cash value of the island. I think there will be no objection on the part of the white inhabitants to selling out, except the fact that the graves of their fathers are on their own farms. But these could be respected and adorned as should those of our fallen soldiers be. I have taken measures to have the names of soldiers lying here sent to the Governors of States to which they belonged, with the request that they will secure for them suitable and enduring monuments. These will add to the beauty and historic interest of the island.

I beg you will excuse the length of this letter. I will endeavor seldom to transgress in this way.

Meantime I am ever
very faithfully yours

Horace James
Chapn & Supt of
Neg Aff's

[Horace James to Major General Benjamin F. Butler, 20 February 1864, Records of the Department of Negro Affairs for Virginia and North Carolina, Record Group 105, series 4108, National Archives.]