

These are two pages of a letter, originally hand written by Daniel Pratt (Prattvilles' Founder) to an old friend and financier. It is particularly interesting because of the information about his gin shop and current events.

Prattville, Ala. July 19, 1854

Friend Chandler,

Dear Sir:

Your esteemed favor of the 29th March has just been received. I may naturally suppose you are a long distance from here from the length of time it takes letters to come. I am truly glad to hear from you but am sorry to learn you are so feeble. (Before I go any further, let me give you some good advice). You have enough of this world's goods to permit all the comforts of this life and it is presumable you think as much of yourself as you do of any body else. If so, take care of your self, make yourself as comfortable as you can. Live the balance of your days on what you have labored hard for, there are none of us that can be perfectly happy in this life, let us make ourselves as happy as circumstances will admit and live in a constant preparation for perfect happiness hereafter.

Your money and the interest on it I will keep Just so long as you desire me to do so. Any portion of it will at any time be subject to your order. Should I receive any instructions from you what disposition to make of it in case of your death, they will be complied with if in my power to do so.

Should be pleased to meet you in New Orleans but cannot say when I shall be there. I have not been there in about 18 months. Should you wish to meet me there at any particular time, let me know, I will endeavor to be there.

I am going on as usual with my business. I find my old gin shop too small. It is getting a good deal worse for wear. I find I should have to stop to repair or build now, therefore, concluded to build a new shop which I am now doing, expect to be able to move into it at next year. I am building it on the west side of the creek. I am putting it up of brick, 220 feet long, 50 feet wide with a wing 34 X 40 all three stories high. I am expecting to put in the best of machinery and to have the best cotton gin factory in the world. Several years since I put up a brick building where the old Grist mill was about 232 feet long, 29 feet wide, three stories high. I use this for sash door and blind business, a machine shop for the foundry and a carpenters shop.

When my gin shop is up, I shall run the machinery in both buildings by the same wheel. I put up a large Breast Wheel between the two buildings going from one end to the gin shop from the other to the sash & B shop. It is attended with a heavy expense. I intend what I do hereafter to have it permanent, something that will induce these who come after me to keep up the place. I can turn out in this shop 1500 gins annually if necessary. I last year finished up a brick building on the west side probably the best brick building in Alabama. It is 75 feet by 140. The lower story is finished up into stores the upper story has a church 75 X 60, neatly finished a Sunday School room 75 X 40 and six smaller rooms which are used for various purposes. I am getting old (55 tomorrow), must quit building. I think, however, that our village will continue to improve slowly, We have 5 stores here, all I believe doing well. Have a printing office - 3 churches and 2 schools.

Ashby, Morgan and Augusta are here. Merrill has gone to visit his mother in New Hampshire. Augusta spent last summer there - saw Mrs. Chandler. She said Mrs. Chandler looked quite old and infirm. I have heard nothing from any of your folks since. I presume you get the general news of the day through the papers. If so, you see the world is in commotion - the Eastern and Northern States on the slavery question, Europe in war with Rusha and some prospect of Spain with the United States. What the result may be is hard to say. I shall stay at home and try to attend to my own business, hope others will do the same.

Daniel Holt and family are settled here, are healthy and appear to be satisfied, doing much better then they did in New Hampshire. Mrs. Pratt's and our little daughter, Ellen's health are very good, my own health has been tolerably good most of the time. When you get tired of living by yourself, come here. We will do the best we can to make you comfortable.

Should be pleased to hear from you often, should like a history of that far off country, a description of your place and improvements. Let me know whether you keep house or board out. If you are keeping house, should I pass, shall stop and spend a night.

Yours truly,
DANIEL PRATT