

GIFTS AND ACQUISITIONS

The Civil War in Letters and Diaries

Recent manuscript acquisitions have contributed to the Library's fund of original material relating to nearly every phase of the war, in the North and South, East and West, on the battlefield and in the garrisons. Indeed, the acquisitions of the past few months provide a sort of microcosm of the Civil War, illustrating its depth and breadth and the shattering importance it had to those whose lives were bound up in it. In letters and diaries recently acquired, men who felt the full impact of the war have recorded their impressions, and now these records are available for historians.

One would naturally suppose that the greatest part of these manuscript records in the Rutgers University Library would relate to New Jersey men, and that is indeed the case. Records of other states' participation in the war are not lacking from our recent acquisitions, however. From the Charles A. Philhower Collection came an unusually complete record of Private Charles H. Brown, Company E, 104th Regiment, Illinois Volunteers, and his service with the First Brigade of the Second Division of the XIV Army Corps in Tennessee. The letters, all addressed to his mother, Elizabeth Brown, relate his army experiences completely, beginning with his first awareness of the choice between enlisting and being drafted:

[It] is feared that there will be a draft this week. . . . I dont know but I shall have to go. . . . The volunteers get \$60 from the county. Farmers here ar paying \$25 to volunteers. The bord of comisioners agree to furnish thare famaleys till thare return. The government pays them \$100 County \$25. . . . I had rather in list than be drafted. (August 10, 1862)

By April 11, 1863, his training was "complete," for he writes, "tomorrow wea ar ordered to start for Dixey for Mufris borrow [Murfreesboro] to reinforce Rosecrans." Later letters describe his participation or lack of participation in most of the battles in Tennessee. Invalided for some time by an attack of typhoid fever, he was one of many hundreds in an invalid corps defending Chattanooga, and he seems to have bent every effort possible toward obtaining garrison details whenever he could. All his letters provide good evidence of

conditions in the army at their worst (on the field) and their best (particularly in the hospital in Chattanooga).

From the Philhower Collection also came the only Confederate manuscripts recently acquired by the Library. In the papers of William C. Connelly of Albany, Georgia, are several letters written by Connelly while he was an officer in Lee's army, including one very full account of life in the Confederate army written just before the Wilderness Campaign, April 28, 1864. Connelly wrote like the war-wearied veteran he was:

No news — the enemy are concentrating on our front and we are looking for a fight pretty soon. Our brigade is still in a disorganized condition; Troops are known to be on their way to the command, and not til they come will [we] be ready as a brigade for the field.

The inflation of Confederate currency and the impoverished status of the army make up a large part of his letter:

I see by the Richmond papers that the bills are 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ pr ct discount, and that it bears very hard on all those who have to earn there daily bread by labour. No money has been paid to the army as yet, altho government is doing everything in its power to forward the issue of the new currency. Should we go to Pennsylvania this summer I will do some foraging or more properly stealing to make up for my former shortcomings in past campaigns.

A third gift of Charles A. Philhower is a volume of approximately contemporary copies of the letters of Joseph Franklin Sterling, Company F, First Regiment of Pennsylvania Artillery. These letters are extremely full and well written; Sterling had been a student at the University of Pennsylvania, Class of 1855, and his powers of observation and intelligence were far above those of the common soldier in the Civil War. He could and did complain about the food, point out the irony of being marched off to war to the strains of "Dixie," and note that "the N. J. Zouaves and some other of the rough companies" who were garrisoned in the Capitol in Washington were tearing the building apart. He was also in some of the most violent fighting, and reported, among other things, the experience of being wounded and captured during the battle of Gettysburg. By then he had risen to the rank of captain in the 121st Pennsylvania Regiment, and was shot, as he wrote, when he was "hoping to get the men to rally around the colors" during one of the first skirmishes on July 2,

1863. His letters describing all the phases of the war and his service in it are intensely interesting and historically significant.

Both Connelly's and Sterling's letters, like most first-hand accounts of the Civil War, or any war, tell far more about the everyday conditions of life in the army than about battles and carnage. The prospect of annihilation was, perhaps, more than a soldier could face—at least to write a letter about. But the everyday discomforts, the strange new situations, these were eminently suitable for description in the casual letter back home. No better example of this kind of writing exists than one letter in the Thompson Family Papers from Private D. H. Amerman to Miss Charity Thompson, written from Bell Plain Landing in Virginia to Pleasant Run, Hunterdon County, New Jersey, January 26, n.y.:

We boil our own Coffee in our tin cups and when we have meat we cook it in our tin plates. The same ones that we eat out of. You may think that it is a curious way of cooking, and so it is, yet we relish it as well as if it had been cooked in silver kettles. We have had no bread but hardtack sinse we left Washington and do not expect to untill we return. I think that crackers are much better for us. I must now tell you how we sleep. We are encamped along side of a hill. We pitched our tents so that our heads lay up hill and our feet down. This morning when I awoke I found that I had slidden down so far that my head was where my feet ought to have been. This is the way the soldiers live. I like it verry well.

Probably the most striking Civil War papers acquired by the Library recently are the Ellis Hamilton papers, a gift of Rev. Anthony J. Reif of Newark. Hamilton, as he revealed himself in his letters, was a most personable and intelligent young man. His letters are invariably interesting, whether they are describing scenes of battle or explaining why his officer's pay could never last the two months between payday:

"We officers" don't draw rations from the government for the very simple reason that they don't allow us any, and as I eat at least a meal a day and sometimes two, it makes a pretty good sised [*sic*] hole in my pile, but as I am living now principally on the provisions that Father sent me, I may get along for a while. . . . Just tell Father that if he has a little change he doesn't know what to do with he can send it along.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the Hamilton Papers is that they include enough supplementary information to give a nearly full

history of Ellis's entire military career. Details missing in his letters are filled in by pocket diaries for the years 1863 and 1864, and the history of his wound and death is given in letters from his aunt to his mother and father. One of the ironies connected with his fatal wound is the fact that for several months previously he had been attempting to get an appointment to a less dangerous position. On March 12, 1864, he wrote his mother,

I wish you would ask Father (confidentially) if he cannot get me an appointment on some Gen'l's staff as this "footpadding" is about done up.

But, on April 8, 1864, he wrote again:

Tell Father that if he has to buy a position on the staff to [for]get it. I would rather do without it, for I don't want anything of that kind that has to be bought.

One month later he was wounded in the Battle of the Wilderness, and within a week he was dead.

The letters and diaries are unusual as a personal testament of a fine character and as evidence of a good-humored and withal virtuous man, in the older sense of that word. As documents of the history of the Civil War, they have a value that is shared by many other collections of papers, but as a revelation of Ellis Hamilton, Captain, Fifteenth New Jersey Volunteers, they are unique.

The papers of Addison S. Clark of Westfield, New Jersey, reveal one other history of a life in the Civil War that was probably not at all typical, but certainly interesting. Clark apparently went South slightly before the beginning of the war to help manage some family property in Savannah, Georgia. With the coming of the war, he was forced to remain in the South to protect his family's interest in the property, threatened by the Confederate "Sequestration Act," which rendered void all wills which passed southern properties into northern hands. His letters are guarded and circumspect, but one can see in them all the elements of melodrama. Beleaguered in the South, Clark worried about how he could escape conscription in the Confederate Army. He acquired an exemption certificate because of "rheumatic gout" and succeeded in having the certificate renewed annually in the face of the South's successively more desperate need for soldiers. But he was a marked man to the Southerners, and his

letters include many references to censorship and, obliquely, to the dangers he ran personally and the risks that all his efforts to save the property in Savannah would come to nought. In spite of the dangers, Clark was moved before many months of his self-imposed exile were over to ask his wife to come South. She declined to do so, however, and he remained alone in his vigil.

The end of this stage of his life came in December, 1864, when Sherman entered Savannah. In almost identical terms, Clark described how the Confederate soldiers pillaged the city before they left and how the Union soldiers did the same before Sherman was able to restore order:

scenes of pillaging and deprivations; Ruffians that infest all armies, with mobs of low white women and negroes went from store to store, forcibly entering them and then gutted them completely. It seemed to me that the fiends of Hell were let loose.

Clark was not badly off, he found. He had wisely purchased a six-months supply of flour (\$240/ bbl.), rice (\$.45/lb.), and molasses (\$20/gal.) before the Union army appeared, but the \$4000 he had in worthless Confederate money was of no help to him in his new situation. He was fortunate to obtain a job as forage clerk for the Union army at a salary of \$75 per month and provisions, which kept him until he returned to the North. Subsistence he found not too difficult, but to the end of his stay he worried, and quite properly, that the military government might find him somewhat remiss in his patriotism to have remained in a rebel town for four years. All apparently turned out well, however; Clark's last letter home, dated January 27, 1865, states that he has almost enough money saved to make the trip and that he expects to return within a few days. Thereafter the letters cease, and we must assume that he was successful.

One most unusual aspect of the Civil War is documented in the papers of the Whitney family of Milltown, New Jersey. Eben Whitney, partly in order to avoid the draft, partly to learn something about medicine, partly through a sincere desire to aid the suffering, spent most of the war years as a male nurse in two hospitals in Philadelphia, the first a private hospital, unidentified beyond its location at the corner of "12th and Buttonwood," the second a U. S. hospital at Chestnut Hill. Whitney's letters, chiefly to his mother and father, are full of details about his work, and particularly about

the difficulties he labored under. His ward in the private hospital contained "118 men which fill the floor full when the beds are spread out," he had "160 doses of medicine to give in one day," and did not know "when I have slept all night" last. To add to his troubles, his pay was not forthcoming at the private hospital for many months and he was forced to borrow on the prospect of it. He wore an army uniform and was subject to the provost-marshal, but nonetheless feared the draft; apparently his work held no deferment. Conditions for the hospital staff even in the Army hospital were nearly intolerable. Whitney wrote that

You are mistaken about my "sleeping somewhere." I seldom do. I did for a while have a three-cornered stick of wood where I slept but since I got my overcoat I don't care for the stick & sleep in my coat or on it.

But, unfortunately, perhaps the most interesting element of the letters is mentioned so rarely and in such little detail that one's curiosity is completely unsatisfied by his mention of it. On January 23, 1863, Whitney wrote that the hospital on "12th and Buttonwood" was to be cleared of all its patients except those suffering from venereal diseases and was to become "a hospital exclusive for Syphilitic cases." Whitney was quite upset by the change and wished to resign, but did not. However, he rarely mentioned anything further in his letters about the new specialty of the hospital, and the historian really has little to gain from his letters about this curious by-product of the war, except that an entire hospital, housing nearly 500 patients, was required for the treatment of soldiers with venereal diseases.

The following Civil War manuscripts were also recently received:

William A. Andrews. Papers (post-Civil War) relating to a disability suffered by him while serving with the 23rd Regiment, Massachusetts Infantry. 10 items. Gift of the Genealogical Society of New Jersey.

Elon F[rancis] Brown. "Daily Journal," transcribed with additional notes and explanations from pocket memoranda kept while a member of Co. H, 2nd Regiment, Wisconsin Infantry. The transcription was done while Brown lay wounded in a U. S. Army hospital in Frederick, Maryland, beginning March 15, 1864. It covers the years 1863-4. 214 p. Microfilmed from the original in the possession of Leonard Lipman, through Frank Spurduto.

Louisa Wheeler Crane Cook. Letters received from her brothers Aaron D. Crane, private, Co. H, 2nd Regiment, New Jersey Infantry, and Henry D. Crane, private, Co. E, 1st Regiment (3-month) New Jersey Infantry, later an officer in Co. C, 7th Regiment, New Jersey Infantry, chiefly from Virginia and Maryland, 1861-5. 90 items. Deposit by Mrs. Margaret C. Tomkinson, Sayreville, N. J.

John S. Garrett. Letters sent to Miss Margaret E. Kemerling (and a few to his parents), from Co. A, 46th Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry, 1862-5. c.100 items. Deposit by Harry M. Schneider, Somerville, N. J.

Edward C. Jones. Letters from James L. Conklin, 2nd Regiment, New Jersey Infantry, 1861-2, killed in action, 1862; letters of Edward C. Jones, 14th Regiment, New Jersey Infantry, to Abraham Jones, Plainfield, N.J., 1862-5. c.100 items. Gift of the Genealogical Society of New Jersey.

William Ryno. Letters received, January 11-February 19, 1863, about the wounds and death of his brother Augustus, private, Co. C, 28th Regiment, New Jersey Infantry. 4 items. Photocopies from the originals in the possession of Carl R. Woodward, Rutgers, '14.

George H. Snow. Diary and other papers relating to his 9-month enlistment in Co. E, 25th Regiment, Connecticut Infantry, September 1, 1862-June 10, 1863. Microfilmed from the original in the possession of Mrs. R. K. Herrick, Milltown, N. J.

Robert B. Vanderhoef. Letters to his brother Howell, written as a soldier in the 9th Regiment, New Jersey Infantry, North Carolina, 1863. 2 items. Gift of Mr. Clayton Kent, Highland Park, N. J.

Jacob Castner Wandling. Civil War Journal, August 28, 1862, to June 19, 1863, completely detailing his service as a private in Co. B, 31st Regiment, New Jersey Infantry, a 9-month regiment engaged chiefly in Virginia, including Chancellorsville, with a copy of a letter written by Wandling to a brother serving in the Confederate army. 111 p., microfilmed from the original through Mrs. Fred R. Alleman.

John B. Wicks. Papers, chiefly orders, relating to the 104th Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry, 1862-4. c.20 items. Gift of Charles A. Philhower.

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