Manuscript Finding Aid

Title: Civil War Collection

Collection #: Ms B15

Dates: 1861-1889

Size of Collection: .5 linear feet (1 box)

Accession Number: unknown; L96.29; L2007.13

Donor: Mrs. William H. Van Dusen; Roland B. Burke; William B. Glover; Mrs. Allan Prior; Mr. and Mrs. F. Sturges III; Earl Blair; Beth Northrop; Katherine Sullivan; Paul Brzozowski

Restrictions: None

Processed by: Martha Rockwell; additional processing by Barbara Austen and William Sansfield

Date: July 1986; July 1996; added to June 2010

Biographical/ historical note:

This subject collection was created in 1986 by accumulating gifts from a number of donors, along with printed documents and Fairfield Town Records that were gathered by Historical Society staff or given by unknown donors. It has been added to over as items were collected.

Scope and content note:

The collection consists of letters from soldiers to their families, muster and bounty receipts, and commemorative items relating the activities of and reactions to the Civil War. Letters and other military papers are organized into series alphabetically by soldier’s name. The most complete series of letters (Series B) are from William W.
Disoway of New York who was killed in battle October 13, 1863. In addition to letters to his family, William’s papers include a letter sent by his Captain to his parents notifying them of his death; a resolution on his service from officers of his regiment; and letters of condolence to his family. Several of the items are accompanied by wrappers with notes presumably written by his mother, mourning the loss of her son. There are also pen and ink drawings of scenes from the war, including “William’s tent,” and copies of a carte de visite William had made before his death. William also served as a judge advocate, as evidenced by copies of court-martial proceedings.

Other letter-writing soldiers include Walter Abbe of the 37th Regiment, New York Militia (Series A); Sergeant George Hale of Westport (Series D) and Corporal Allen Smith of Ridgefield (Series E) who served in the 17th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers; and Captain George Starr (Series F) of the 104th Regiment, New York Volunteers. The discharge certificate, 1863, of M. V. B. Dunham (later doctor of Greenfield Hill) from the 43d Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers, is in Series C. Two passes issued to Frederick Sturges in 1861 constitute Series G. Assorted correspondence and legal documents, including a parole, a discharge, and pension records are organized chronologically in Series H, along with photocopies of letters written by George E. Northrop to his parents in Southport between 1861-1863. Series L consists of the 1865 discharge papers of Frank Burr from Co. C, 2nd Regiment New York Artillery Volunteers. A leatherbound diary kept by Private Levi French of Co. D, 23rd Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers in 1863 while with Major General Nathaniel Banks’ expedition, Commander of the Department of the Gulf, is Series M.

Fairfield Town Records related to the Civil War include correspondence to and from town selectmen, pay vouchers, the appointment of an extra postmaster, muster receipts, and bounty receipts, 1862-1864. These documents are arranged in Series I. Series J encompasses reunion programs and songs honoring the 17th Regiment of Connecticut Volunteers, and a handwritten copy of John H. Glover’s speech at the Fairfield reunion in 1883. The original is extremely fragile. Researchers are asked to use the photocopy.

Commemorative and published items not associated with a specific person are organized in Series K. Among these materials are commemorative envelopes; a newspaper from Mobile, Alabama, 1862, and the New York Herald issue announcing President Lincoln’s assassination in 1865; and printed documents related to the draft. Of interest is a list of corps, evidently part of the Corps of Engineers, with hand-drawn and colored symbols for the three divisions within each corps. The artist is anonymous.

Oversized items stored in the flat files include a Soldiers Memorial, 1st Regiment Connecticut Cavalry, 1864; muster list of the 2d Connecticut Light Battery, 1862; and an illustrated certificate of George C. Short’s activities in the U. S. Navy.

Series A. Walter Abbe Papers, 1862-1864
Series B. William Wilkins Disoway papers, 1861-1864
Series C. M. V. B. Dunham Papers, 1863
Series D. George Hale Papers, 1863-1865
Series E. Allen Smith Papers, 1863-1864
Series F. George H. Starr Papers, 1862-1864
Series G. Frederick Sturges Papers, 1861
Series H. Correspondence and Legal Documents, 1861-1880
Series I. Fairfield Town Records, 1862-1864
Series J. 17th Regiment Connecticut Volunteers Records, 1862-1889
Series K. Commemorative and Printed Materials, 1862-1886
Series L. Frank Burr papers, 1865
Series M. Levi French papers, 1863

Oversized Items
Series A. Walter Abbe Papers, 1862-1864
  Folder 1. Correspondence and discharge and membership certificates,
            1862-1864; pass for G. W. Abbe, 1862

Series B. William Wilkins Disoway Papers, 1861-1864
  Folder 1-5. Correspondence to family members, 1861-1863
  Folder 6. Military passes, 1861-1862; court-martial documents, 1862
  Folder 7. Correspondence and resolutions concerning his death, 1863-1864
  Folder 8. Newspaper clippings, 1863
  Folder 9. Cartes de visite, 1863
  Folder 10. Sketches of war scenes, ca. 1863
  Folder 11. Family letters, 1861, 1862

Series C. M. V. B. Dunham Papers, 1863
  Folder 1. Discharge, 1863
Series D. George Hale Papers, 1863-1865
   Folder 1. Correspondence with Francis D. Perry, 1863-1865

Series E. Allen Smith Papers, 1863-1864
   Folder 1. Correspondence with family, 1863-1864

Series F. George H. Starr Papers, 1862-1864
   Folder 1. Correspondence with Ruth Root, 1862-1864

Series G. Frederick Sturges Papers, 1861
   Folder 1. Military passes, 1861

Series H. Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1861-1880
   Folder 1. Letters, 1861, 1863; parole document, Charles H. Willson, 1862; discharge and service certificate, Ludwig Jeckel, 1865, 1886; pension documents, Andrew Crissey, 1880
   Folder 2. Copies of letters from George E. Northrop, 1861-1863

Series I. Fairfield Town Records, 1862-1864
   Folder 1. Correspondence, pay vouchers, draft notices, postmaster appointment, 1862-1864
   Folder 2. Muster receipts, 1862, including muster-in for Elias Howe, Jr., Company D, 17th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry
   Folder 3. Bounty receipts, 1862

Series J. 17th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers Records, 1883, 1889
   Folder 1. Reunion programs and songs, 1883, 1889
   Folder 2. Speech by John H. Glover, 1883 (please use photocopy)

Series K. Commemorative and Printed Materials, 1862-1886
   Folder 1-3. Commemorative envelopes, ca. 1863
   Folder 5. Draft documents, printed, 1862

Series L. Frank Burr Papers, 1865
Folder 1. Discharge certificate from Company C, 2nd Regiment, NY Artillery Volunteers, 1865

Folder 1. Leatherbound diary kept by Private French, Company D, 23rd Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers, 1863

Oversize Drawer

Soldiers Memorial, 1st Regiment, Connecticut Cavalry, 1864
Muster list, 2d Connecticut Light Battery, 1862
Certificate, George C. Short, U.S. Navy

Subject headings:

Bounties, military--Connecticut--Fairfield
Fairfield (Conn.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865
New York (State)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Personal narratives

1st Regiment, Connecticut Cavalry
2d Regiment, Connecticut Light Battery
17th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers
23rd Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers
1st Regiment, New York Mounted Rifles
Abbe, Walter
Burr, Frank
Disoway, William Wilkins, 1843-1863
Dunham, Martin Van Buren, 1840-1932
French, Levi
Hale, George, 1840-1920
Smith, Allen
Starr, George H.
Sturges, Frederick

Regiments mentioned in the collection:

1st Regiment, Connecticut Cavalry
2nd Regiment, Connecticut Light Battery
17th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers
23rd Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers
43rd Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers
1st Regiment, New York Mounted Rifles
2nd Regiment, New York Artillery
9th Regiment, New York
20th Regiment, New York Volunteers
37th Regiment, New York Militia
104th Regiment, New York Volunteers
Names included in the collection:

Abbe, Walter                              Kennedy, John
Burr, Frank                                Northrop, George
Crissey, Andrew                            Perry, Francis
Disoway, William Wilkins                   Root, Ruth D.
Dunham, Martin Van Buren                    Short, George C.
French, Levi                               Smith, Allen
Glover, John H.                             Starr, George H.
Hale, George                               Sturges, Frederick
Jeckel, Ludwig                              Willson, Charles H.

Walter Abbe soldier Co. F, 37th Reg., NY State Militia
Frank Burr Pvt. Co. C, 2nd Reg., NY Artillery
W. W. Disoway Lieut. Troop M, 1st NY Mounted Rifles
George H. Starr Lieut./Capt. Duryea’s Brigade, 104 NY Regiment