

New Hampshire State Library



Willard J. Templeton Civil War Letters: 1862-1864



Call #: ARC 973.781 T288

Finding Aid
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Scope and Content: The collection consists of some 140 letters sent to family members and friends by a soldier in the 11th Regiment New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry, Company D, during the Civil War. Stationed at various times in Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., the letters refer to several battles, including Fredericksburg, Vicksburg, Knoxville, Battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg.

The letters offer a window into the daily experience of a young union soldier during the Civil War. Writing to his siblings, parents, and friends, he comments on geography (with a farmer's eye), the weather, Army food, military pay, disease, battles, the condition, equipment, and behavior of soldiers on each side, and slavery. He records observations of major cities such as Baltimore and Washington, and of the way of life of the southern states in which he is stationed. He makes frequent comparisons to New Hampshire weather, soil, manners and attitudes, and shows devoted interest in the lives and financial well-being of his loved ones.

Biographical Background: Willard J. Templeton was born in Hillsborough, New Hampshire in 1842. He enlisted in the 11th NH Regiment on August 16, 1862 and mustered in on August 29th as a private. He was wounded in the arm at Spotsylvania, Virginia on May 12, 1864 (see letter dated May 17, 1864), and served as part of the color guard at the battle of the crater during the siege of Petersburg, Virginia. He was killed there in the mine explosion on July 30, 1864.

Provenance: Gift to the New Hampshire State Library from Mrs. Charles H. Walker, of Ware, Massachusetts, 4/18/1946.

Condition of the Collection: The letters are fragile and the writing is often faint, especially where written in pencil. Some of the edges have been worn away or torn. The typed transcripts themselves are brittle.

Collection Strengths: One of the primary strengths of the collection is the sheer volume of letters written by this optimistic, observant, and articulate young man. Writing between 3 and 11 letters home every month (except January of 1864), Templeton provides the reader with an on-the-ground experience of the campaigns and battles during 22 months of the war. When the undated letters are taken into account, the average is over 6 letters per month.

There are typed transcripts of part of the collection by Elsie Walker, which are invaluable to the reader when the originals are too faint, faded, or difficult to read.

Collection Size: .25 linear ft.

Span Dates: September, 1862 - July, 1864.

Copyright Status and Access: The collection is owned by the New Hampshire State Library and may not be copied or reproduced in any manner without advance written permission from the library director or designee. The collection does not circulate but may be viewed upon request.

Arrangement and Description: The collection is organized into five series, contained in one legal-size archival box and a folio.

Series I contains the original letters written by Templeton, organized into folders by date.

Series II contains oversize original letters, organized by date.

Series III consists of typed transcripts of some of the letters, prepared by Templeton's grand-niece, Elsie B. Walker.

Series IV contains photocopies of Series III.

Series V contains photocopies of some of the original oversize letters.

Names and Subjects:

Burnside, Ambrose E., Major General

Templeton Family

Templeton, Willard J.

Walker, Elsie B.

Army of the Potomac

Battle casualties

Hillsborough, N.H.

Petersburg (Va.) -- History -- Siege, 1864-1865

Soldiers -- United States -- Correspondence

Spotsylvania (Va.) - History

Slavery

United States -- Army -- New Hampshire Infantry Regiment, 11th (1862-1865)

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 - Battles, sieges, etc.

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 - Campaigns

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Correspondence

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 - Personal narratives

Container List

Series I: Original Correspondence

Container	Written from	# Letters	Date
Box 1			
Folder 1	Washington, Baltimore	6	9/13 - 9/21/1862
Folder 2	Virginia, Maryland	3	10/1 - 10/12/1862
Folder 3	Virginia	6	11/5 - 11/28/1862
Folder 4	Fredericksburg, Va.	5	12/3 - 12/28/1862

Folder 5	Virginia, Tennessee	7	1/9 - 1/31/1863
Folder 6	Newport News, Va.	3	2/7 - 2/22/1863
Folder 7	Newport News, aboard ship	6	3/3 - 3/31/1863
Folder 8	Kentucky	7	4/2 - 4/27/1863
Folder 9	Kentucky	7	5/9 - 5/31/1863
Folder 10	Kentucky, Tennessee	11	6/2 - 6/28/1863
Folder 11	Mississippi	3	7/17 - 7/28/1863
Folder 12	Kentucky	5	8/4 - 8/25/1863
Folder 13	Kentucky	5	9/8 - 9/27/1863
Folder 14	Kentucky, Tennessee	6	10/6 - 10/31/1863
Folder 15	Tennessee	4	11/2 - Thanksgiving, 1863
Folder 16	Tennessee	7	12/5 - 12/27/1863
Folder 17	Tennessee	3	2/5 - 2/9/1864
Folder 18	Tennessee	6	3/15 - 3/27/1864
Folder 19	Annapolis, Maryland	5	4/3 - 4/22/1864
Folder 20	Virginia	6	5/6 - 5/20/1864
Folder 21	Virginia	7	6/1 - 6/26/1864
Folder 22	Petersburg, Virginia	3	7/2 - 7/20/1864
Folder 23	various places	31 sheets/fragments	Undated

Box 2

Series II: Original Correspondence - Oversize

Folios	Mississippi, Kentucky, Tenn.	6	July, Aug, Oct, 1863
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Box 3

Series III: Typed transcripts

Folder 24	See originals, above	32 sheets	9/13/1862-4/26/1863
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Series IV: Copies of transcripts

Folder 25	See originals above	39 sheets	9/13/1862-4/26/1863
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Series V: Copies of oversize

Folder 26	See originals above	2	7/13 - 7/24/1863
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Regimental History and Service of the 11th Regiment, New Hampshire Infantry:

The information in this section was summarized from the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors website of the National Park Service: <http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/regiments.cfm>. It is not part of the Templeton papers collection but has been included as an appendix because it provides a context and historical timeline which aids in understanding the papers.

The regiment was organized at Concord, mustered in September 2, 1862, and moved to Washington, D. C., September 11-14, 1862.

Regimental Affiliations:

Attached to Brigg's Brigade, Casey's Division, Military District of Washington, to October, 1862.
2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 9th Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, to March, 1863.
2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 9th Army Corps, Dept. of Ohio, to June, 1863.
2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 9th Army Corps, Army of the Tennessee, to August, 1863.
2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 9th Army Corps, Dept. of the Ohio, to April, 1864.
2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 9th Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, to June, 1865.

Regimental Service:

- Moved to Pleasant Valley, Md., October 4, and duty there till October 27, 1862.
- Movement to Falmouth, Va., October 27-November 19, 1862. Battle of Fredericksburg, Va., December 12-15.
- Burnside's Second Campaign ("Mud March") January 20-24, 1863.
- Moved to Newport News February 11, thence to Covington, Ky., March 26-April 1.
- Duty at various points in Kentucky till June.
- Moved to Vicksburg, Miss., June 4-14. Siege of Vicksburg, Miss., June 14-July 4.
- Advance on Jackson, Miss., July 4-10. Siege of Jackson, Miss., July 10-17.
- Destruction of Railroad at Madison Station July 18-22.
- At Milldale, Miss., till August 6.
- Moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, August 6-14.
- At Covington, Ky. till August 26, and at Nicholasville, Camp Parke, Crab Orchard and Loudon till October.
- March to Knoxville, Tenn., October 12-29. Knoxville Campaign November 4-December 23.
- Campbell Station, November 16.
- Siege of Knoxville November 17-December 4.
- Repulse of Longstreet's assault on Fort Saunders November 29.
- Duty in East Tennessee till March, 1864.
- Moved to Annapolis, Md., March 18-April 7.
- Campaign from the Rapidan to the James River, Va., May 3-June 15.
- Battles of the Wilderness May 5-7.
- Spotsylvania May 8-12. Spotsylvania Court House May 12-21.
- Assault on the Salient, Spotsylvania C. H., May 12.
- North Anna River, May 23-26.
- On line of the Pamunkey, May 26-28.
- Totopotomoy, May 28-31.
- Cold Harbor, June 1-12.
- Bethesda Church, June 1-3.

- Before Petersburg, June 5-19. Siege of Petersburg June 16, 1864, to April 2, 1865. Mine explosion, Petersburg, July 30, 1864.
- Weldon Railroad, August 18-21.
- Poplar Springs Church, September 29-October 2.
- Boydton Plank Road, Hatcher's Run, October 27-28.
- Fort Stedman, March 25, 1865.
- Appomattox Campaign, March 28-April 9.
- Assault on and fall of Petersburg, April 2. Occupation of Petersburg April 3.
- Pursuit of Lee, April 3-9.
- Moved to Washington, D. C., April 20-27, and duty at Alexandria till June.
- Grand Review May 23. Mustered out June 4, 1865.

The Regiment lost during service 5 officers and 140 enlisted men killed and mortally wounded and 1 officer and 151 enlisted men by disease. Total 297.

Sources consulted:

Ayling, Augustus D. Revised register of the soldiers and sailors of New Hampshire in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1866. Prepared and published by authority of the [NH] legislature. Concord, N.H.: Ira C. Evans, 1895.

Call #: 973.7442 Ar

Childs, Lewis, and the Reunion Committee of Company D. How the flag of the eleventh New Hampshire regiment was saved at Petersburg. Hillsboro, N.H., 1916.

Call #: 973.7442 Mr11h

Cogswell, Leander W. History of the Eleventh New Hampshire Regiment Volunteer Infantry in the rebellion war, 1861-1865. Concord, N.H.: Republican Press Association, 1891.

Call #: 973.7442 Mr11c

Union New Hampshire volunteers, 11th Regiment, New Hampshire infantry.

<http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/regiments.cfm>

Accessed 7/16/2008.