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MS-125: Samuel E. and Clara Turner Papers, 1861-1865

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MS-125: Samuel E. and Clara Turner Papers, 1861-1865

Description

This collection consists of 10 dated letters and one undated letter fragment, all written by either Samuel Epes Turner or Clarinda ("Clara") Turner of Baltimore, Maryland, to their cousins Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward of Salem, Massachusetts, between April 29, 1861, and January 13, 1865.

The letters include the Turners' firsthand impressions of Baltimore's historic anti-Union riot of April 19, 1861; reflections on other events of the Civil War, local, regional, and national; statements of their own pro-Union and abolitionist views; responses to the secessionist sentiment prevalent within the city; and discussions of family matters, finances, church business, mutual acquaintances, etc.

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Keywords

Civil War, Union, abolitionists, Baltimore riots, Civil War correspondence, 6th Massachusetts

Disciplines

History | Military History | Social History | United States History

Guide to the Samuel E. and Clara Turner Papers, 1861-1865



**Gettysburg College, Musselman Library
Special Collections & College Archives**

**Processed by Devin McKinney
January 2012**

MS – 125: The Samuel E. and Clara Turner Papers, 1861-1865

(1 box, .27 cubic feet)

Inclusive Dates: April 29, 1861 – January 13, 1865

Bulk Dates: 1862 & 1865

*Processed by: Devin McKinney
January 2012*

Historical and biographical notes:

In mid-April 1861, following the Battle of Fort Sumter, President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for volunteers to recapture forts in secessionist Southern states. One of the first volunteer units to respond was the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment.

On Friday, April 19, 1861, 500 soldiers of the Sixth, under the command of Col. Edward F. Jones, attempted to pass through Baltimore on their way to Washington, D.C. Secessionist feeling was strong in Maryland, and particularly in Baltimore, whose mayor, George William Brown, and police marshal, George T. Kane, were vocally anti-Union.

Upon arrival at the President Street depot, the troops began a horse-drawn convoy to Camden Station at the southern end of the city. Their way was blocked by a mob of civilians who pelted the soldiers with rocks and other debris, and even, by some accounts, fired off muskets. The soldiers in turn fired randomly into the crowd. Baltimore was in the grip of a full-scale riot.

By the time it was quelled several hours later, four soldiers and as many as 12 civilians were reported killed in the rioting, with dozens more wounded on both sides. It was the first bloodshed of the American Civil War.

In the aftermath, Mayor Brown and Marshal Kane moved to cut off Baltimore by destroying several rail lines and bridges, a plan authorized by Governor Thomas Holliday Hicks. Secessionist citizens cut telegraph lines to disrupt communication between the North and the nation's capitol. But on May 13, martial law was declared, and the troops of Maj. Gen. Benjamin Franklin Butler occupied the city. Order had been reestablished, but only tenuously. Secessionism continued to seethe in Baltimore for the remainder of the war, alongside an equally passionate base of Union sympathy.

Among the Baltimoreans actively supporting the Union were Samuel Epes Turner (1809-1875), a paper manufacturer who was well-established in the commercial and civic life of the community; and his wife Clarinda Sparrow (1824-1903), or Clara, a mother, homemaker, and participant in various women's associations. Abolitionists as well as

Unionists, the Turners were involved in many war-related activities, such as the election of political representatives and relief projects for soldiers' families. The Turners' roots were in Massachusetts, and they wrote of the war's progress and their daily lives in numerous letters to Samuel's cousins, Mary Holyoke Ward Nichols and Mehitable Ward, in Salem.

Scope and Content Notes:

The Samuel Epes and Clara Turner Papers consist of 10 dated letters and one undated letter fragment, all written by either Samuel Epes Turner or Clarinda ("Clara") Turner of Baltimore, Maryland, to their cousins Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward of Salem, Massachusetts, between April 29, 1861, and January 13, 1865. The bulk of the letters were written in 1862 and 1865.

The letters include the Turners' firsthand impressions of Baltimore's historic anti-Union riot of April 19, 1861; reflections on other events of the Civil War, local, regional, and national; statements of their own pro-Union and abolitionist views; responses to the secessionist sentiment prevalent within the city; and discussions of family matters, finances, church business, mutual acquaintances, etc. The letters are arranged chronologically.

Box 1: Series 1 — Correspondence

- 1-1 Letter from Samuel Epes Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward, April 29, 1861
- 1-2 Letter from Samuel Epes Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward, January 21, 1862
- 1-3 Letter from Clara Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward, March 2-3, 1862
- 1-4 Letter from Clara Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward, June 1-2, 1862
- 1-5 Letter from Samuel Epes Turner and Clara Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward, September 11-12, 1862
- 1-6 Letter (fragment) from Clara Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward, undated, possibly late 1863
- 1-7 Letter from Clara Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward, June 14, 1864
- 1-8 Letter from Samuel Epes Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward, June 15-16, 1864
- 1-9 Letter from Samuel Epes Turner and Clara Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward, October 5-6, 1864

- 1-10 Letter from Clara Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable Ward,
January 11, 1865
- 1-11 Letter from Samuel Epes Turner to Mary Holyoke (Ward) Nichols and Mehitable
Ward, January 13, 1865