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MS-063: Melancthon E. Washburn Family Collection

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MS-063: Melancthon E. Washburn Family Collection

Description

The Melancthon E. Washburn Papers consist primarily of correspondence between Washburn and his family members during the Civil War period. While the letters date anywhere from 1857 to 1883, most of them fall into the 1861 to 1865 time frame. The collection also consists of a wide range of miscellaneous items, including newspaper clippings collected into scrapbooks, the diary of Melancthon's son William Washburn, wedding invitations, Confederate bonds and currency, and a public broadside advertising a slave auction.

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Keywords

Civil War, telegraph office, Democratic Party, slavery, abolition, states' rights

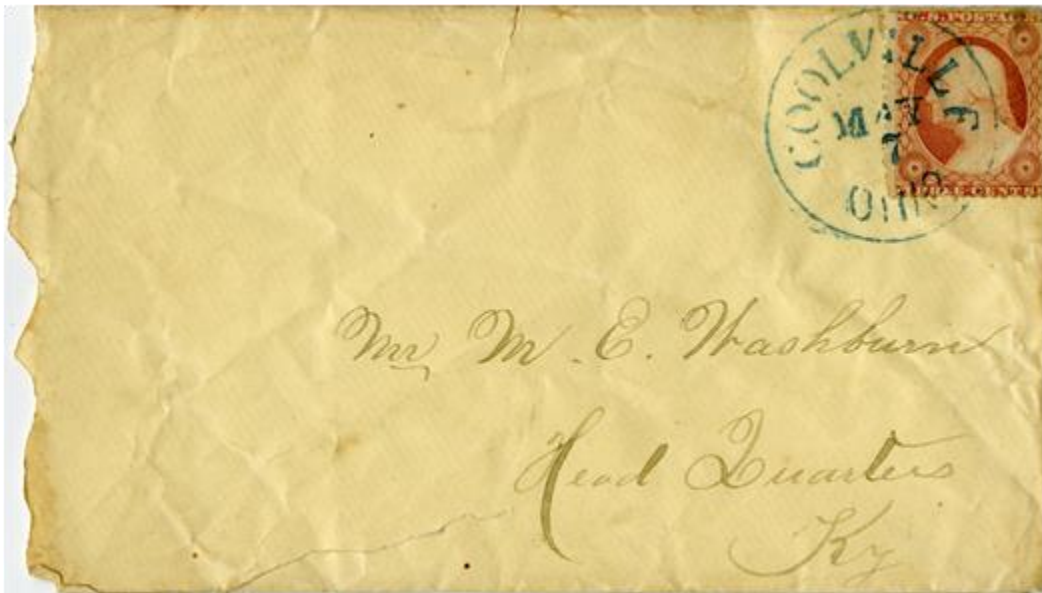
Disciplines

History | Political History | Social History | United States History

Gettysburg College
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special collections

Guide to MS-063:

Melancthon E. Washburn Family Collection



Gettysburg College, Musselman Library
Special Collections and College Archives

Stephen Light
April 2005

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Processed by Stephen Light
April 2005

Size

4 boxes, 1.08 cubic feet

Dates

Inclusive: 1857-1883
Bulk: 1861-1865

Provenance

The Melancthon E. Washburn Family Collection was donated anonymously in April of 1991.

Biographical Note

Melancthon E. Washburn was born sometime during or around 1836, the son of Roswell (?) Washburn and Laura Cleveland (?). Washburn's mother died in 1839 and Roswell remarried. Known as "Lank" to family and friends, Washburn and his large family and stepfamily lived in Coolville, Ohio as of 1857. In the years leading up to and during the Civil War, Washburn moved throughout a number of different states, variously being employed as a school teacher and studying law.

Between January of 1858 and October of 1864, Washburn taught in the following places: Federalton, Ohio; Cairo, Kentucky; Athens, Ohio; Headquarters, Kentucky; Long Bottom, Ohio; Lebanon, Kentucky; Charleston, (West) Virginia; Camp Piatt (West) Virginia; Mexico Missouri; Meredosia, Illinois; and De Sota, Missouri. During the winter of 1862 and 1863 Washburn was located in Cincinnati, Ohio studying law. It does not appear however that he ever passed the bar.

In 1865 Washburn received employment as a U.S. Military Telegraph Operator in Missouri and eventually in Lawrenceburgh, Indiana. Despite the name, the US Military Telegraph service was run by civilians not soldiers and it was in this capacity that Washburn served. Following the war he began working as a telegraph operator for the Indianapolis and Cincinnati Railroad, and settled in Guilford, Indiana. He was married to a woman named Mary (sometimes referred to as Mollie) sometime between October and December of 1866, and had at least two children (Only two are documented in the collection), William G. who was born sometime before 1871 and Cora Pearl.

Scope and Content Note

The Melancthon E. Washburn Papers consist primarily of correspondence between Washburn and his family members during the Civil War period. While the letters date anywhere from 1857 to 1883, most of them fall into the 1861 to 1865 time frame. The collection also consists of a wide range of

miscellaneous items, including newspaper clippings collected into scrapbooks, the diary of Melancthon's son William Washburn, wedding invitations, Confederate bonds and currency, and a public broadside advertising a slave auction.

The content of the letters cover a wide range of topics, such as the war, politics, daily life, and family news. The letters from Melancthon's father especially are a great source for understanding the hardships a subsistence farming family had to endure in the era. The letters also provide the unique perspective of a family loyal to the Democratic Party in the North and hostile to the idea of abolition and the Republican Government attempting to implement such a practice.

The scrapbooks contain articles focusing on a few different topics. Included among other subjects in the first scrapbook are the assassination of Lincoln, Mormons in Utah, Slavery, War news, and a complete set of installments of *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, a novel written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. The latter scrapbook contains mostly literary stories and poetry, although there is some news coverage as well.

Series Description

This manuscript collection is divided into two series. **Series I:** Correspondence, **Series II:** Miscellaneous Items.

Box List

Box 1

Series 1: Correspondence

1-1 Letters, 1857

- May 6th, 1857 – From Vine (Sister)
- Dec. 17th, 1857 – From Cynthia (Sister)

1-2 Letters, 1858

- Mar. 6th, 1858 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)

1-3 Letters, 1859

- Jan. 31st, 1859 – From unknown sibling
- Jan. 31st, 1859 – "To father and mother" from unknown sibling
- Jul. 14th, 1859 – From R. Washburn (Father)
- Aug. 12th, 1859 – From Cynthia Caldwell (Sister)

1-4 Letters, 1860

- Jun. 17th, 1860 – From Cynthia Caldwell (Sister)
- Jun. 18th, 1860 – Invitation to Inauguration Ball
- Nov. 4th, 1860 – From Cynthia Caldwell (Sister)

1-5 Letters, 3/22/1861 – 4/21/1861

- Mar. 22nd, 1861 – From Lizzie Cole (Sister)
- Apr. 3rd, 1861 – From Mary Dinsmoor (Cousin)
- Apr. 7th, 1861 – From William R. Story
- Apr. 14th, 1861 – From R. Washburn (Father)
- Apr. 21st, 1861 – Vine Frost (Sister)

1-6 Letters 4/30/1861 – 6/31/1861

- Apr. 30th, 1861 – From Mary Dinsmoor (Cousin)
- May 3rd, 1861 – From Lucy
- May 30th, 1861 – From Marry Dinsmoor (Cousin)
- Jun. 9th, 1861 – From R. Washburn (Father)
- Jun. 31st, 1861 – Multiple letters from Vi Bartlett (Sister) and family, one intended for Liz Cole (Sister)

1-7 Letters 8/18/1861 – 3/16/1862

- Aug 18th, 1861 – From Cynthia Caldwell (Sister)
- Oct. 20th, 1861 – To Gordon Washburn from M.E. Washburn
- Oct. 31st, 1861 – To Gordon Washburn from R. Washburn (in same envelope as Oct. 20th letter)
- Jan. 3rd, 1862 – To M.E. Washburn from L.M. Washburn
- Feb. 23rd, 1862 – Letters from Otie, Alice, Allie, Flora, and Buckey (sisters and brother)
- Mar. 16th, 1862 – From Ed Brawley (?)

1-8 Letters 4/20/1862 – 8/25/1862

- Apr. 20th, 1862 – From Mary (Cousin)
- May 4th, 1862 – From Mary (Cousin)
- May 11th, 1862 – From John and L.J. Whiteside
- May 15th, 1862 – From C.H. Tiffany
- Aug. 25th, 1862 – From L.J. Whiteside

1-9 Letters 10/26/1862 – 2/1/1863

- Oct. 26th, 1862 – From R. Washburn (Father)
- Dec. 21st, 1862 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)
- Dec. 26th, 1862 – From R. Washburn (Father)
- Jan. 15th, 1863 – From R. Washburn (Father)
- Feb. 1st, 1863 – From Vi Bartlett

1-10 Letters 2/9/1863 – 10/25/1863

- Feb. 4th, 1863 – From F.M. Washburn (Brother)
- Mar. 8th, 1863 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)
- Jun. 15th, 1863 – From C.W. Clifford

- Jul. 23rd, 1863 – From Flattie Demmon
- Oct. 25th, 1863 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)

1-11 Letters 11/4/1863 – 12/28/1863

- Nov. 4th, 1863 – From A.A. Rohary
- Nov. 28th, 1863 – From Sadie J. Whiteside
- Dec. 13th, 1863 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)
- Dec 24th, 1863 – From A.A. Rohary
- Dec. 28th, 1863 – From Cynthia Caldwell (Sister)

1-12 Letters 3/13/1864 – 6/22/1864

- Mar. 13th, 1864, From Otie and Allie Washburn (Sisters)
- Mar. 14th, 1864 – From R. Washburn (Father)
- Mar. 16th, 1864 – From Ida Washburn (Sister)
- Apr. 17th, 1864 – From Ella McKinnin
- Jun. 22nd, 1864 – Allie Washburn (Sister)

1-13 Letters 6/26/1864 - 8/14/1864

- Jun. 26th, 1864 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)
- Jun. 28th, 1864 – From Thomas L. Knap
- Jul. 25th, 1864 – From Ella McKinnin
- Jul. 31st, 1864 – From R. Washburn (Father), Allie and Flora Washburn (Sisters)
- Aug. 14th, 1864 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)

1-14 Letters 8/21/1864 – 1/9/1865

- Aug. 21st, 1864 – From Vine Frost
- Oct. 25th, 1864 – From Allie Washburn (Sister) and R. Washburn (Father)
- Nov. 4th, 1864 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)
- Dec. 11th, 1864 – From Harriet Newman (?)
- Jan. 9th, 1865 – Allie Washburn (Sister)

1-15 Letters 2/10/1865 – 4/27/1865

- Feb. 10th, 1865 – From Allie Washburn (Sister)
- Feb. 19th, 1865 – From J. Newman
- Feb. 26th, 1865 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)
- Mar. 26th, 1865 – Letters from Vine and Lucy Belle Frost (Sister and Niece)
- Apr. 27th, 1865 – From Annie Turner

Box 2

2-1 Letters 5/1/1865 – 7/26/1865

- May 1st, 1865 – From Alice Washburn (Sister)
- Jul. 18th, 1865 – From Otie Washburn (Sister)
- Jul. 19th, 1865 – From R. Washburn (Father)
- Jul. 19th, 1865 – From L. Washburn (Brother)
- Jul. 26th, 1865 – From Alice Washburn (Sister)

2-2 Letters 8/6/1865 – 9/24/1865

- Aug. 6th, 1865 – From Allie and Otie Washburn (Sisters)
- Sep. 9th, 1865 – From Nettie Bartlett (Niece)
- Sep. 11th, 1865 – From R., Ida, Allie, Otie, and Flora Washburn (Father and Sisters)
- Sep. 23rd, 1865 – From Allie Washburn (Sister)
- Sep. 24th, 1865 – From Nettie Bartlett (Niece)

2-3 Letters 10/2/1865 – 11/19/1865

- Oct. 2nd, 1865 – From W.W. Smith
- Oct. 8th, 1865 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)
- Oct. 25th, 1865 – From Sophy
- Nov. 15th, 1865 – From Thomas Catlin
- Nov. 19, 1865 – From R. and Flora Washburn (Father and Sister)

2-4 Letters 11/21/1865 – 3/1/1866

- Nov. 21st, 1865 – From Alice Washburn (Sister) and Lily Bailey
- Dec. 4th, 1865 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)
- Unknown date (1866) – From Ida and Otie Washburn (Sisters)
- Feb. 12th, 1866 – From R., Ida, Flora, and Otie Washburn (Father and Sisters)
- Mar. 1st, 1866 – To W.W. Smith from M.E. Washburn (returned with reply by W.W. Smith)

2-5 Letters 3/29/1866 – 6/17/1866

- Mar. 29th, 1866 – Pass for M.E. Washburn along Indianapolis and Cincinnati Railroad
- Apr. 1st, 1866 – From Lizzie Cole (Sister)
- Apr. 6th, 1866 – From Flora Washburn (Sister)
- Apr. 18th, 1866 – From Flora, Ida, and R. Washburn (Sisters and Father)
- Jun. 17th, 1866 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)

2-6 Letters 7/25/1866 – 5/5/1867

- Jul. 5th, 1866 – From Flora and R. Washburn (Sister and Father)
- Oct. 7th, 1866 – From Alice Washburn (Sister)
- Dec. 2nd, 1866 – From Alice Washburn (Sister)
- Apr. 27th, 1867 – From F.M. and Alice Washburn (Brother and Sister)
- May 5th, 1867 – From R., Ida, and Flora Washburn (Father and Sisters)

- 2-7 Letters 5/27/1867 – 4/11/1868
- May 27th, 1867 – From Vi Bartlett (Sister)
 - Jul 7th, 1867 – From Flora and Alice Washburn (Sisters)
 - Jul 12th, 1867 – From R. Washburn (Father)
 - Aug. 8th, 1867 – From R. and Alice Washburn (Father and Sister)
 - Apr. 11th, 1868 – From Vine Frost (Sister)
- 2-8 Letters 5/9/1868 – 5/30/1869
- May 9th, 1868 – From R. Washburn (Father)
 - Jun. 1st, 1868 – From Flora Washburn (Sister)
 - Nov. 29th, 1868 – From R. and Alice Washburn (Father and Sister)
 - May 13th, 1869 – From R. and Flora Washburn (Father and Sister)
 - May 30th, 1869 – From R. Washburn (Father)
- 2-9 Letters 6/13/1869 – 4/3/1870
- Jun. 13th, 1869 – From R. Washburn (Father)
 - Sep. 12th, 1869 – From Cynthia Caldwell (Sister)
 - Nov. 28th, 1869 – From Flora Washburn (Sister)
 - Feb. 28th, 1870 – From Flora Washburn (Sister)
 - Apr. 3rd, 1870 – From Vine Frost (Sister)
- 2-10 Letters 6/7/1870 – 3/12/1871
- Jun. 7th, 1870 – From R. and Flora Washburn (Father and Sister)
 - Jul. 27th, 1870 – From R. Washburn (Father)
 - Oct. 5th, 1870 – From Flora Washburn (Sister)
 - Jan. 29th, 1871 – From Nettie Bartlett (Niece)
 - Mar. 12th, 1871 – From Cynthia Caldwell (Sister)
- 2-11 Letters 3/20/1871 – 9/17/1871
- Mar. 20th, 1871 – From Flora Washburn (Sister)
 - Mar. 27th, 1871 – From Nettie Bartlett (Niece)
 - Jul. 9th, 1871 – From Nettie Bartlett (Niece)
 - Sep. 10th, 1871 – From Flora Washburn (Sister)
 - Sep. 17th, 1871 – From Flora Washburn (Sister)
- 2-12 Letters 10/9/1871 – 12/29/1883
- Oct. 9th, 1871 – From Mollie Washburn (Wife)
 - Oct. 11th, 1871 – To Mollie from M.E. Washburn
 - Oct. 22nd, 1871 – From Flora Washburn (Sister)
 - Oct. 10th, 1880 – From Cynthia Caldwell (Sister)
 - Unknown Date – From Alice Washburn (Sister)
 - Dec. 29th, 1883 – From Ed Surasher (submission to Guilford Literary Journal, M.E. Washburn was editor)

Box 3

Series 2: Miscellaneous Items

- 3-1 Miscellaneous items pertaining to Melancthon E. Washburn, including: teaching certification, possible submissions to Guilford Literary Journal, and *Washburns of America* newsletter.
- 3-2 Wedding and other invitations, including announcement of commencement activities at unknown school.
- 3-3 Miscellaneous items pertaining to William Washburn, son of M.E. Washburn, including diary with off and on entries from May 6th, 1890 to April 8th, 1891.
- 3-4 Genealogical Notes, includes obituaries of Luella Washburn (wife of William) and Daniel Augur Jennings (Luella's father), along with notes on the family of William and Luella.
- 3-5 Miscellaneous items concerning individuals whose relationship to M.E. Washburn is unknown. Items in this section include enlistment certificates for Alonzo and Joseph Dickerson into the 19th Michigan, a contract signed by Alonzo Dickerson, and the will of Robert D. Clark, all of Michigan.
- 3-6 Confederate Currency and Bond Notes.
- 3-7 Broadside Advertisement of Slave Auction (Reproduction)
- 3-8 Scrapbook of Newspaper Clippings from 1853-1865 (probably belonging to M.E. Washburn, but ownership not definite).

Box 4

- 4-1 Scrapbook of Newspaper Clippings in the 1880s (probably belonging to M.E. Washburn, but ownership not definite).

Contact Information

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