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## MS-199: Mary Metcalf Barrett Letters

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## MS-199: Mary Metcalf Barrett Letters

### **Description**

This collection is comprised of seventeen Civil War era letters from Mary Metcalf Barrett to her sister, Elvira Metcalf Aplin between 1859 and 1872. She discusses her feelings about the Civil War, her worry over her son and nephews away fighting, her experiences of life on the home front in Manchester, New Hampshire during the war when foodstuffs are expensive and sometimes hard to find. She repeatedly mentions the mills and industries in town limiting hours or closing altogether, affecting all the employees and making the town destitute. She talks about her income from making and mending clothing but also her expenses and how her family and the Lord send money when she needs it. She frequently includes her religious beliefs and her desire for her nephews and son to make peace with God before something might happen during the Civil War.

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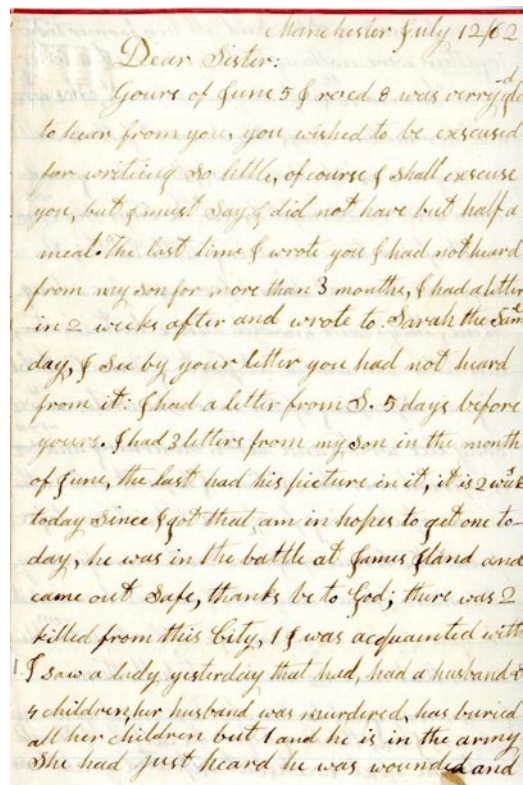
### **Keywords**

Civil War, Civil War Correspondence, Civil War Homefront, New Hampshire, Civil War Women, 3rd New Hampshire

### **Disciplines**

History | Military History | Social History | United States History | Women's History

## Guide to the MS-199: Mary Metcalf Barrett Letters



Gettysburg College, Musselman Library  
Special Collections & College Archives

Lauren H. Roedner  
September 2016

## **MS – 199: Mary Metcalf Barrett Letters**

(1 box, .33 cubic feet)

Inclusive Dates: 1859-1872

Bulk Dates: 1861-1865

*Processed by: Lauren H. Roedner  
September 2016*

### **Provenance**

This collection was donated by Cynthia Norris in August 2015. The letters were passed down through the family from the original author to the donor's mother, Gail Welter Webster. In 1870, the recipient of the letters, Elvira Metcalf Aplin, lived with her sister Martha Metcalf Boughton in Vienna, Michigan. Elvira died in September 1880, and Martha must have kept the letters in the house after Elvira's death. The letters were then likely left to Martha's son, William O. Boughton, upon her death. William died in 1913, and the letters were passed to his daughter, Hattie Boughton Miller in Flint, Michigan. The bulk of the letters were later passed to her daughter, Faye Miller Welter, with at least one letter going to her son, Howard O. Miller. Faye passed the letters on to her daughter, Gail Welter Webster, who later gave them to the donor, Cynthia Norris. This provenance was established, as accurately as possible, by the donor.

### **Biographical Note**

The author of these letters, Mary Metcalf Barrett, was born to Nathan Metcalf and Olive Estabrook in Washington, New Hampshire in 1797. She was likely well educated in grammar and penmanship, and was a deeply religious person. She married Charles Barrett of Stoddard, New Hampshire in 1823 in Cheshire County, New Hampshire. They had at least four children including Nancy, Clara, Cyrus Anson, and Olive. The couple seems to have parted while the children were still young, with at least some of the children staying with the father while Mary is cited as living in Manchester, New Hampshire. In one of her letters she mentioned remembering when her own young children would cry from hunger but have nothing to feed them. This may have contributed to the couple's separation. By 1850, one of her children, Clara, was listed as living with her mother. The letters indicate she was also very close to her youngest daughter, Olive, whom she tried to help with the children during the Civil War years.

Mary's only son, Cyrus Anson, enlisted in the Civil War in the 3rd New Hampshire Volunteers. She refers to her son as Anson. While on leave in New Hampshire to get married, he fell ill and spent time in the hospital in Concord, New Hampshire before returning to duty. He survived the war and returned to Francestown, New Hampshire to live with his wife and her daughter from a previous marriage.

### **Scope and Content Notes**

This collection is comprised of seventeen Civil War era letters from Mary Metcalf Barrett to her sister, Elvira Metcalf Aplin between 1859 and 1872. She discusses her feelings about the Civil War, her worry over her son and nephews away fighting, her experiences

of life on the home front in Manchester, New Hampshire during the war when foodstuffs are expensive and sometimes hard to find. She repeatedly mentions the mills and industries in town limiting hours or closing altogether, affecting all the employees and making the town destitute. She talks about her income from making and mending clothing but also her expenses and how her family and the Lord send money when she needs it. She frequently includes her religious beliefs and her desire for her nephews and son to make peace with God before something might happen during the Civil War.

The collection also includes complete transcriptions of each letter, provided by the donor, genealogical information for the Metcalf family including references for each man who enlisted in the Civil War, and copies of Civil War military documents for several members of the extended family. A glossary of nineteenth century terms is included to help decipher some the letters, and the envelope that Hattie Boughton Miller used to give her son, Howard O. Miller, at least one of the letters.

### **Subjects**

United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Correspondence  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865  
United States. Army – History – Civil War, 1861-1865  
United States. Army – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Correspondence  
New Hampshire – History – Civil War, 1861-1865  
New Hampshire – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Correspondence

### **Series Description**

This collection is divided into two Series. **Series 1:** Background Research & Supporting Materials, **Series 2:** Letters (with transcriptions)

### **Box 1**

1-1 Finding Aid

#### **Series 1 Background Research & Supporting Materials**

1-2 Background Research & Supporting Materials

- Narrative from donor with provenance, letter overview, and genealogical information
- Metcalf Family Tree
- Henry H. Aplin Pension Record – 16th Michigan Infantry
- Henry H. Aplin Service Record – 16th Michigan Infantry
- George Aplin Service Record – 10th Michigan Infantry
- William O. Boughton Pension Record – 1st Michigan Infantry
- Finding Aid for the Aplin Family Papers, 1859-1960 at the William L. Clemens Library, University of Michigan

- 19th Century Glossary of terms from the book, *Unpuzzling Your Past*
- Envelope dated 1942 with an inscription from Hattie Boughton Miller sharing family letters from Mary Metcalf Barrett with her son, Howard O. Miller

**Series 2 Letters (with transcriptions)**

1-3 Letters (with transcriptions) Pre-Civil War

- November 27, 1859 & October 8, 1859 (multiple letters on same sheet)
- January 1861
- February 24, 1861

1-4 Letters (with transcriptions) 1861-1862

- April 29, 1861
- July 1861 & August 12, 1861 (multiple letters on same sheet)
- January 27, 1862
- April 7, 1862
- July 12, 1862
- August 31, 1862 (transcription copy of a letter Margaret Miller Bisel submitted to a Eaton County, Michigan, magazine. It was given to her by her father, Howard O. Miller. It is likely the letter from the envelope with Hattie's inscription giving a letter(s) to Howard in 1942.)

1-5 Letters (with transcriptions) 1863-1865

- April 30, 1863
- August 7, 1864
- June 1865
- July 23, 1865

1-6 Letters (with transcriptions) 1867-1872

- December 15, 1867
- November 8, 1868
- December 19, 1869
- June 6, 1870
- September 19, 1872 (letter fragment, only first page)