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MS-072: Adin B. Thayer, Co. B, 16th Maine Volunteer Infantry

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Description

This collection contains twenty-one Civil War era letters, ranging from 1862-1865, written by Adin Thayer of the 16th Maine. Most of his letters are written to family members prior to his capture and imprisonment in the Confederate prison camp in Salisbury, North Carolina. The final letter in the collection is dated April 26th, 1865 and is addressed to Thayer's father from Sgt. William Fennelly, of the 16th Maine informing him of his son's death.

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Keywords

Civil War, 16th Maine, Waterville, Maine, Battle of Gettysburg, Prisoner of War, Belle Isle Prison, Richmond, Overland Campaign, Petersburg, Battle of Weldon Railroad, Confederate Prison Camp

Disciplines

History | Military History | United States History

**Guide to
Adin B. Thayer, Co. B,
16th Maine Volunteer Infantry**



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

**Processed by Christopher Gwinn
June 2006**

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June 2006*

Provenance: Purchased from Charles Apfelbaum, 2005

Biography:

Eighteen year old Adin B. Thayer, from the town of West Waterville, Maine enlisted in the 16th Maine Volunteer Infantry on August 14th, 1862, following Abraham Lincoln's second call for volunteers to put down the rebellion. He listed his marital status as single and it can be surmised that his occupation was that of a farmer considering his repeated inquiries about the spring planting and the welfare of the crops and his colt. He was assigned to Company B of the 16th regiment and joined the Army of the Potomac just prior to its engagement at the Battle of Antietam, fought on September 17th, 1862. The 16th Maine did not take part in that encounter, but suffered heavily in the following months from sickness and ill health, brought on by a lack of proper clothing and shelter. Adin Thayer was one of many who fell ill and was therefore sent to a U.S. general hospital in Annapolis, MD where much of his correspondence was addressed from.

He rejoined the 16th Maine in time to take part in the battle of Fredericksburg, where he was wounded in the leg and sent again to recuperate in a general hospital. He recovered and fought in the Battle of Gettysburg where he was captured on July 1st, the first day of fighting. After a forced march to Staunton, Virginia where "...the rebels used us rather hard sometimes they would give us half a pint of flour and two pounds of meat for three days...", he was imprisoned at Belle Isle Prison in Richmond where he would remain for ten weeks till exchanged.

Thayer participated in the 1864 Overland Campaign until the siege of Petersburg and the August 18th, 1864 Battle of Weldon Railroad where he was captured for a second time, along with many of the men in his regiment. Sent to a Confederate prison camp, this time in Salisbury, North Carolina he died on the 23rd of January 1865 of chronic diarrhea. Sgt. William Fennelly who was with Thayer when he died later wrote to Adin's father that, "We did not belong to the same Co. but I was with him so much that I learned to think as much of him as I did of anyone in my own company."

Scope and Content Notes:

The Adin Thayer collection consists of 21 letters containing 41 pages total. Thayer's correspondence begins on March 25th, 1862 at Portsmouth Grove and continues till he penned his last letter on August 7th, 1864 from outside Petersburg, VA. The final letter in the collection is dated April 26th, 1865 and is addressed to Thayer's father from Sgt. William Fennelly, of the 16th Maine informing him of his son's demise in the Confederate prison camp at Salisbury, NC. All of the letters are addressed to members of Thayer's family in Waterville, ME. Thayer primarily writes to his father Phillip and sister

Ellen although other letters are directed towards his younger brother and to his mother. Often Thayer will write to two separate individuals on the same piece of stationary, addressing his father on the front and his sister on the back.

Spanning the majority of the conflict, Thayer's letters were written from a variety of locations through out Maryland and Virginia. The bulk of his collected correspondence dates from the time of his convalescence in the U.S. general hospitals of Washington DC and Annapolis, MD.

Thayer's early correspondence is notable for its lack of war related material. Mostly he was concerned with the goings on of home and the progress of the spring planting on the farm. "I want you to write all about the crops and how and when you see my colt and how he grows so good." He seems to never have been satisfied with the amount of letters from his family, evidenced by his writing after a long period with no mail, "I shall begin [to] think that all you folks have forgotten all about me before a great while longer."

Thayer also commented on the movements of the armies and his experiences in the conflict, particularly in regard to the December 13th, 1863 battle of Fredericksburg and his first experience as a prisoner of war following the July, 1863 battle of Gettysburg.

Box 1:

1 – 1 Correspondence: March 25, 1862 – September 13, 1862

March 25, 1862	Portsmouth Grove: Dear Father
June 5, 1862	Camp near White Oak Church: Dear Father; Dear Sister
September 13, 1862	Ridgeville, MD: Dear Sister
September 13, 1862	Ridgeville, MD: Dear Father

1 – 2 Correspondence: October 10, 1862 – December 22, 1862

October 10, 1862	Encamped near Sharpsburg, MD: Dear Sister Ellen
October 22, 1862	U.S. General Hospital: Dear Father
November 8, 1862	General Hospital: Dear Father; Dear Brother
December 22, 1862	Alexandria the Government Hospital: Dear Father

1 – 3 Correspondence: January 9, 1863 – March 16, 1863

January 9, 1863	Alexandria: Dear Father; Dear Sister; Dear Mother
January 20, 1862	U.S. General Hospital, Portsmouth Grove: Dear Father;
Dear Sister	
March 16, 1863	U.S. General Hospital, Portsmouth Grove: Dear Father;
Dear Sister	

1 – 4 Correspondence: October 1, 1863 – October 22, 1863

October 1, 1863	College Green Barracks, Annapolis, MD
October 13, 1863	U.S. General Hospital, Annapolis, MD: Dear Father
October 22, 1863	Dear Sister

1 – 5 Correspondence: February 23, 1864 – May 8, 1864

February 23, 1864	U.S. General Hospital, Annapolis, MD: Dear Sister
March 28, 1864	U.S. General Hospital, Annapolis, MD: Dear Father
May 2, 1864	Camp Parole, Annapolis, MD: Dear Sister
May 8, 1864	Camp Parole, Annapolis, MD: Dear Father

1 – 6 Correspondence: July 11, 1864 – April 26, 1865

July 11, 1864	Camp Petersburg, VA: Dear Father
August 7, 1864	Near Petersburg, VA: Dear Sister
April 26, 1865	North East Harbor, ME: Sgt. William Fennelly, Co. H, 16 th ME to Dear Sir

1 – 7 Correspondence, Envelopes & Photograph

June 24, 1863 Waterville, ME: C. R. McFadden to Phillip Thayer regarding \$88 money order Photograph of Adin B. Thayer in uniform; taken post March 1864.
Envelopes from Correspondence (7)

1 – 8 Clothe and cardboard plaque reading “A. THAYER 16TH MAINE”

1 – 9 Photocopies of biographical and unit information