

Benson, George W., Correspondence

George W. Benson Correspondence

1863-1865



Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.1988.083

Unit Date

1863-1865

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

The collection contains eleven letters written by a Pennsylvania soldier to his sister from hospitals and camps in Washington, D.C., Ohio, Virginia, and Pennsylvania during the American Civil War.

Creator

Benson, George W.

Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Source of Acquisition

The George W. Benson Correspondence was purchased by Special Collections and University Archives in 1988.

Processing Information

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Preferred Citation

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Biographical Note

The letters in this collection suggest that their writer is the same George Benson, age 35, who enlisted in the 202nd Pennsylvania Infantry at Allentown on August 30, 1864, for one year's service during the American Civil War. (A letter from his sister (Rachel?), dated July 28, 1864, suggests that Benson was then living in Allentown with his sister Sarah and was contemplating a return to the army. Benson's subsequent letters coincide with the movements of the 202nd.) In his letter of June 30, 1865, Benson noted that he had been in the army for 16 years. He may be the same George Benson who enlisted in Battery M, 3rd United States Artillery at Fort Vancouver, Washington on April 20, 1859. Born in Berks County, Pennsylvania, this 30-year-old Benson enlisted for five years' service. The enlistment record notes that this was Benson's third enlistment in the 3rd Artillery. A veteran named George Benson, 38, re-enlisted at Philadelphia on October 4, 1865. A native of Berkes County, Pennsylvania, his description matches that provided for the George Benson who had served in the 3rd U.S. Artillery. Benson died of yellow fever while serving as a sergeant in Company B, 24th U. S. Infantry at Vicksburg, Mississippi, on December 5, 1867, and was buried in Vicksburg National Cemetery.

The 1870 census lists Sarah Snyder, sister of George Benson, among the residents of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The census describes her as a 44-year-old widow, living with her daughter Kate, a 23-year-old seamstress. Sarah Snyder (1826-1908), daughter of James (or Joseph) and Mary Isenbise Benson, was buried with her husband, John B. Snyder, in Aulenbach's Cemetery, Mount Penn (Berks County), Pennsylvania.

Scope and Content

The collection contains eleven letters by George W. Benson, a Pennsylvania soldier stationed and hospitalized around Washington, D.C., Ohio, Virginia, and Pennsylvania between 1863 and 1865 during the American Civil War. The letters, written to his sister (whom he identifies as Sarah at one point), describe camp and hospital life but focus largely on personal matters.

The first six of Benson's letters were written from hospitals (Columbian College Hospital in January, 1863, and Camp Dennison, Ohio, early 1864). The letters focus largely on Benson's relationship with his sister Sarah and her daughter Kate, mentioning his desire to be with them at Christmas, thanking them for provisions, and enlisting their assistance in finding a wife.

Writing from Chambersburg (September 27, 1864) and Springfield Station, Virginia (March 12, 1865), Benson continues to focus on personal matters. His final letter is written from Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, on June 20, 1865. He describes his meals, noting that they "have had no provisions for the last five days but coffee and bread only, and for the last fifteen days . . . nothing but pork bread & coffee, and the bread is sour and haf [sic] baked at that." Benson adds that he has "experienced 16 years of the United States servis [sic] and I have never yet experienced what I have within the last month," and tells her that he is coming home in a few days.

The collection also contains a letter from R. [Rachel?] Chapman, sister of George Benson. Written from

Buffalo, New York, on July 28, 1864, the letter is addressed to an unnamed sister and to George Benson, apparently living in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Chapman mentions hearing that Benson will soon return to the army. As the letter is addressed to both siblings, we may infer that Benson lived with his sister Sarah for some time in the summer of 1864.

Keywords

Civil War

Correspondence

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

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Description of Subordinate Components

Correspondence

Unit Date 1863-1865

folder 1