

Mervine, Henry G. Letters

Henry G. Mervine Letters

1864-1865



Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Revision Description

2020-08-31 Finding aid notes updated to new department standards. juliags
2021-05-10 LM Rozema added missing notes for an unprocessed collection (abstract, source, processing, bio note), added FA title, added FA date from EAD, and added component with instances previously attached to collection level.

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.1989.046

Unit Date

1864-1865

Language

The material in the collection are in English.

Abstract

Two letters from Henry G. Mervine, of the 17th Battery, New York Light Infantry during the American Civil War, addressed to his wife Lizzie and written from Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia.

Creator

Mervine, Henry G.

Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

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Source of Acquisition

The Henry G. Mervine Letters were purchased by Special Collections and University Archives in 1989.

Processing Information

The processing and description of the Henry G. Mervine Letter commenced and was completed in January 2022.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Henry G. Mervine Letters, Ms1989-046, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Henry Gird Mervine, son of William and Amanda Maria Crane Mervine, was born in Cedar Lake (Herkimer County), New York on January 12, 1822. He married Eliza H. Fairman; the couple would have five children. The 1860 census shows the Mervines living in Ridgeway (Orleans County), New York, where Henry Mervine was employed as a day laborer. On August 18, 1862, Mervine enlisted as a private in the 17th New York Light Artillery Battery at Medina, New York. He continued to serve with the 17th through the war and by the time he mustered out on June 12, 1865, he was serving as a clerk in the battery. The 1870 census lists Henry G. and Eliza Mervine among the residents of Canandaigua (Ontario County), New York, with Henry Mervine working as a pension agency clerk. By 1880, the Mervines were living in Syracuse (Onondaga County), New York. Henry Gird Mervine died in Canastota (Madison County), New York on November 7, 1895, and was buried in Oakwood Cemetery, Syracuse.

Scope and Content

This collection contains two letters from Henry G. Mervine, a private serving in the 17th New York Light Artillery Battery during the Civil War, written to "Dear Lizzie," presumably his wife, from Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia. In the earlier letter, written from the trenches before Petersburg on July 24, 1864, Mervine describes conditions in the trenches during the siege and taking furniture from a nearby house to protect himself in the earthworks. He notes that "the trees--trunks & limbs in this vicinity are filled with lead & iron, or shot away intirely [sic]. Every house completely demolished." He writes at length about rations, stating that the battery is well supplied: "As far as concerns eatables we are better supplied than ever before by Uncle Sam ... Have had Cabbage Sour Kraut, Onions Potatoes & Beets ..." He also mentions Confederate soldiers wanting to trade newspapers across the lines.

In the second letter, dated April 8, 1865, from Richmond, Virginia, Mervine writes of being quartered "in the basement of one of the big folks houses in the fashnonable [sic] part of the city" and being well treated by the owners but notes that the "young ladies of the city turn up their pretty noses at us ... though as a general thing they seem to be glad to be well rid of their own soldiers." He briefly describes the suffering of local residents through lack of luxuries and necessities and the Union Army's efforts to relieve them. Mervine continues by mentioning that citizens of Richmond had sent a committee to General Lee, asking him to surrender. "[T]he thing is nearly played out," he writes.

Keywords

Civil War

Petersburg (Va.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

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

Richmond (Va.)

Rights Statement for Archival Description

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General

The letters identify the writer only as "Henry." The attribution to Henry G. Mervine originates with the dealer from whom the letters were purchased. The two letters appear to have been written in two different hands.

Description of Subordinate Components

Letters

Unit Date 1864-1865

folder 1