

Smith Family Letters

Smith Family Letters
1861-1865, 1912-1996, n.d.



Title Statement

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Ms.1996.018

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.1996.018

Unit Date

1861-1865, 1912-1996, n.d.

Unit Date

1861-1865

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

The collection contains forty-nine Civil War-era letters written by four brothers of Carroll County, Virginia: James R., Stephen Mitchell, William Alexander, and Barton Pierce Smith. All four served in Confederate units from Virginia. The collection also includes a family history and notes by Frederick R. Smith.

Creator

Smith family (Carroll County, Va.)

Creator

Smith, Frederick R.

Creator

Ridgway, John Nichols

Creator

Smith, Barton Pierce, 1838-1863

Creator

Smith, James R., 1831-1863

Creator

Smith, Stephen Mitchell, 1832-1913

Creator

Smith, William Alexander, 1835-1868

Extent

0.2 Cubic Feet 1 box

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

Collection is open to research.

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Source of Acquisition

The Smith Family Letters were donated to Special Collections in October 1996.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Smith Family Letters commenced in October 1996 and was completed in November 1996. Additional description was completed in April 2009.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Smith Family Letters, Ms1996-018, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Alexander (abt. 1807-1893) and Charity (Mitchell) Smith (1798-1858) married in 1828. They had seven children: James R. (1831-1863), Stephen Mitchell (1832-1913), William Alexander (1835-1868), Kiturah (b. 1836), Barton Pierce (1838-1863), Polly G. (b. 1839) and Sarah E. (Sallie) (b. 1840).

James R. enlisted with Co. I of the 50th Regiment, Virginia Infantry around May of 1862. He was sick and on furlough at home in Carroll County when he died in November 1863.

Stephen Mitchell married Mary Gillespie Lindsey (1833-1898) in 1855. They had five children. After Mary's death, he married Emily Lindsey. Since Stephen was the only blacksmith in the region, it seems he was exempt for military service during the early part of the Civil War. When the need for soldiers became pressing, however, he was drafted in late 1864. He served in Company G, 54th Regiment, Virginia Infantry. He seems to have deserted and hidden out on family land until the end of the war. He died in 1913.

William Alexander ("Alex" in the family letters) was a teacher in Carroll County, Virginia. He enlisted with Company I, 50th Regiment, Virginia Infantry, in June 1861, eventually rising to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant in May 1862. While on leave in October of 1863, he married Ann Electra Utley (sister of Barton's wife, Mary). They had two children. William was captured May 12, 1864 at Spottsylvania Court House. He was held

prisoner at Point Lookout from until June 23rd, then held at Fort Delaware until June 16, 1865. He returned to Carroll County after the war and resumed teaching. He died from injuries relating to an accident in December 1868.

Barton Pierce married Mary P. Utley in 1862. They had one daughter. He enlisted in Company D, 29th Regiment, Virginia Infantry, in February of 1863. He is often referred to as "Doc(k)" in his brothers' letters. He may have had medical training prior to the Civil War, as he was assigned as a steward to the regimental surgeon. He was shot and killed by the Home Guard while on furlough, September 24, 1863.

John Nichols Ridgway (1836-1898) served in Company D, 58th Regiment, Virginia Infantry. He married Mildred Ann Kennett after the Civil War. They had one daughter.

Alderman, John P. *28th Virginia Infantry*. The Virginia Regimental Histories Series. Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard, 1989. Rare Book Collection: Spec Civil War E 581.5 29th .A64 1989 c.2

Chapla, John D. *50th Virginia Infantry*. The Virginia Regimental Histories Series. Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard, 1997. Rare Book Collection: Spec Civil War E 581.5 50th .C51 1997 c.2

Weaver, Jeffrey C., and G. L. Sherwood. *54th Virginia Infantry*. The Virginia Regimental Histories Series. Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard, 1993. Rare Book Collection: Spec Civil War E 581.5 54th .E44 1993. c.2

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of forty-nine letters written by the brothers of the Smith family of Carroll County, Virginia, mostly while they served as soldiers for the Confederacy during the Civil War. A majority of the letters are written to one of the brothers, Stephen Mitchell, from encampments in Virginia. Other correspondents include: their father Alexander; Stephen's wife, Mary; and two sisters, Sarah (Sallie) and Polly.

Most of the letters are reports of recent events in camp and daily life, frustrations with the "soldier's life," and inquiries for news and letters from home. The letters also share information on family and friends from Carroll County who are serving with the brothers. William's letters include some description of the battles at Lewisburg and Chancellorsville. Letters to Stephen often contain discussion of the Home Guard and warnings to be cautious and avoid being dragged into service.

The collection includes one letter by John Nichols Ridgway of Franklin County, written in 1862. The collection also contains supplementary information about the Smith family compiled by Frederick R. Smith.

Related Archival Materials

Transcripts of the Smith Family Letters, created for a class project, are [available online](#), with addition background information.

Keywords

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South
Montgomery County (Va.)
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
Civil War
Smith family (Carroll County, Va.)
Smith, Alexander, 1807(?) - 1893

Existence and Location of Copies

Some of this collection has been digitized and is available online.

Rights Statement for Archival Description

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Arrangement

The letters in this collection is arranged into six series. Series I-V are arranged by correspondent, then chronologically. Series VI is arranged chronologically.

Series I contains the Barton Pierce Smith Letters from March to June of 1863. With one exception (a letter to his father), these letters are written to his brother, Stephen Mitchell Smith. Series II contains the James R. Smith Letters from August 1862 to October 1863. His letters are written to Stephen Mitchell (and in one case Stephen and Mary) Smith. Series III includes the Stephen Mitchell Smith Letters from December 1864 to February 1865 written to his wife. This series also has a photograph of Smith's exemption from earlier in the war, and a pension check he received in 1912. Series IV consists of the William Alexander Smith Letters from July 1861 to April 1864. The letters are mostly to Stephen, but also include correspondence to his father, sisters, and brother, James.

Series V consists of a single letter written by John Nichols Ridgway to R.P. Wright, on November 6, 1862. Series VI contains Frederick R. Smith's "A Smith Family History" from 1975 as well as his later notes and letters about the history.

Description of Subordinate Components

Series I: Barton Pierce Smith Letters

Unit Date 1863

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Letter to Alexander Smith

Unit Date March 3, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date March 20, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date April 27, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date May 7, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date June 17, 1863

Series II: James R. Smith Letters

Unit Date 1862-1863

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 2-3 (folder)

Letter to Stephen Mitchell and Mary G. Smith

Unit Date August 29, 1862

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date December 30, 1862

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date March 7, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date April 18, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date May 25, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date May 26, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date July 21, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date September 26, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date October 21, 1863

Series III: Stephen Mitchell Smith Letters

Unit Date 1864-1865, 1912

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 4-7 (folder)

Photograph of Stephen Mitchell Smith's exemption from service

Unit Date 1864

Letter to Mary G. Smith

Unit Date December 4, 1864

Letter to Mary G. Smith

Unit Date December 18, 1864

Letter to Mary G. Smith

Unit Date December 22, 1864

Letter to Mary G. Smith

Unit Date December 25, 1864

Letter to Mary G. Smith

Unit Date January 8, 1865

Letter to Mary G. Smith

Unit Date January 12, 1865

Letter to Mary G. Smith

Unit Date January 19, 1865

Letter to Mary G. Smith

Unit Date January 22, 1865

Letter to Mary G. Smith

Unit Date February 3, 1865

Check for pension, paid under Confederate Pension Law of Virginia

Unit Date August 31, 1912

Series IV: William Alexander Letters

Unit Date 1861-1864

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 8-11 (folder)

Letter to Alexander Smith

Unit Date July 16, 1861

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date August 19, 1861

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date September 7, 1861

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date September 18, 1861

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date October 6, 1861

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date October 21, 1861

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date May 24, 1862

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date June 16, 1862

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date July 22, 1862

Attachment to July 22nd letter

Unit Date n.d.

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date August 4, 1862

Letter to Alexander Smith

Unit Date September 4, 1862

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date October 23, 1862

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date December 23, 1862

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date February 3, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell, Polly, and Sallie Smith

Unit Date February 9, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date March 3, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date April 28, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date May 4, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date June 2, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date July 30, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date August 14, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date August 17, 1863

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date September 22, 1863

Letter to James R. Smith

Unit Date November 26, 1863

Scope and Contents note

James would have been deceased by the time this letter reached the family.

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date January 3, 1864

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date March 23, 1864

Letter to Stephen Mitchell Smith

Unit Date April 29, 1864

Series V: Other Correspondence

Unit Date 1862

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

Letter by John Nichols Ridgway to R. P. Wright

Unit Date November 6, 1862

Series VI: Family History

Unit Date 1975, 1996, n.d.

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 13-14 (folder)

"A Smith Family History" by Frederick R. Smith

Unit Date 1975

Notes and letters by Frederick R. Smith regarding the Smith Family papers

Unit Date 1996, n.d.