

Shields, Hamilton Leroy, Letter

Hamilton Leroy Shields Letter

1842



Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2008.072

Unit Date

1842

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

The Hamilton Shields Letter is a missive from a homesick cadet at the United States Military Academy (also known as West Point) in 1842. The letter discusses Shields's studies, professional plans, social life, and desire for a wealthy wife.

Creator

Shields, Hamilton Leroy, 1823-1889

Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

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Source of Acquisition

The Hamilton Leroy Shields Letter was purchased by Special Collections in 1993.

Processing Information

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Preferred Citation

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Biographical Note

Hamilton Leroy Shields was born to William Cannon Shields and Elizabeth Finch on November 1, 1823, in Norfolk, Virginia. At age 18, Shields was among the cadets that relieved the state guard at the Lexington Arsenal. Shields entered the United States Military Academy (also known as West Point) in 1841 and learned amongst the future generals "Stonewall" Jackson, George E. Pickett, and George B. McClellan.

Following his graduation in 1846, Shields served in the Mexican-American War. After serving as second lieutenant to the Second Artillery, Shields transferred to the Third Artillery in March 1847. On August 20, 1847, Shields was brevetted first lieutenant for "meritorious conduct" in the battles of Contreras and Cherubusco and was later brevetted captain for his conduct in the battle of Molino Del Rey.

In 1851, Shields married Caroline Hart, of Troy, New York. After serving as the judge-advocate of the Eastern Division of the Army until 1853, Shields resigned from the army on March 17, 1854, and became a lawyer in New York City. In 1857, through his wife's connections, Shields obtained land and became a farmer in Bennington, Vermont. Hamilton Leroy Shields died on November 24, 1889.

Source: *The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute from 1839 to 1865* by Jennings Cropper, Lynchburg, Va.: J. P. Bell, 1915. (U430.V8 W8 1915 Spec Civil War)

Scope and Content

The Hamilton Leroy Shields Letter is a handwritten missive from a homesick cadet at the United States Military Academy (also known as West Point) in 1842, to former cadet Philip James Winn, Esquire. The letter discusses Shields's studies, his professional plans, and his desire for a wealthy wife (with at least \$50,000). Shields also discusses the day-to-day life of cadets—specifically mentioning the frequency of illness, lack of women, student resignations, and the tri-weekly cotillion parties. Mentioned geographical locations include Lexington and Richmond, Virginia.

Keywords

Letters

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Description of Subordinate Components

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Letter

Unit Date 1842

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