

Umbarger Family Correspondence

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1863-1867, 1870-1883



Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2010.066

Unit Date

1863-1867, 1870-1883

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

This collection contains correspondence relating to the Umbarger family from 1863-1867 and 1870-1883. Letters detail the family's experiences in the American Civil War and their migration from Jonesville, Lee County, Virginia, to Coss County, Indiana, shortly after the war's close.

Creator

Umbarger family

Extent

0.3 Cubic Feet 1 Box

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Source of Acquisition

The Umbarger Family Correspondence was purchased by Special Collections in 2010.

Processing Information

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Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Umbarger Family Correspondence, Ms2010-066, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Family History

In the decade following the American Civil War, the Umbarger family moved from Jonesville in Lee County, Virginia to Cass County, Indiana. Lee County, VA, was founded in 1793 and named after former Virginia Governor "Light Horse Harry," who was the father of Confederate General Robert E. Lee; the Umbargers left this county because of the lack of work opportunities.

The letters of Martha or "Mattie" Umbarger to her brother represent a large portion of this collection. She was born in 1857 in Tennessee. At the time of the 1880 US Census, she was 22 years old and resided in Deer Creek in Cass County, Indiana. One of her hobbies was writing poetry.

Martha's father, Jonas Umbarger, was born in 1822 in Virginia. He was a farmer and married to a native of Tennessee. Despite his southern origins, he was a Union supporter during the Civil War, but disliked both Negroes and abolitionists.

John D. Umbarger was a 2nd Sergeant in Company G of Virginia's 64th Mounted Infantry; later, he was a prisoner of war. John enlisted in the Confederate army on August 3rd, 1862. He became briefly ill in June of 1863 and was given his sergeant status on May 16th, 1863. On September 9th, 1863, he was taken as a prisoner of war at Cumberland Gap. On the 24th, he was transferred to Camp Douglas, where he stayed until he took the oath on June 15th, 1865.

Camp Douglas, where John was incarcerated by the Union army, was located in Chicago, Illinois. Founded in 1861, it originally was a training camp for Union soldiers, but was hastily adapted into a Confederate prison in 1862. Conditions were poor in terms of sanitation, camp construction, and weather. By the end of the war, about 26,060 total rebels were imprisoned, 4,000 of which perished.

External sources:

1880 United States Census, Deer Creek, Cass County, Indiana; p.469A, Umbarger; familysearch.org; 1254268.

Karamanski, Theodore J. "Camp Douglas." *Encyclopedia of Chicago*. Web. 06 Oct. 2010. <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/207.html>.

Weaver, Jeffrey C. *64th Virginia Infantry*. The Virginia Regimental Histories Series. Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard, 1992. Print. (Call number E581.5 64th .W42 1992 in Newman Library and Spec Civil War of Special Collections and University Archives)

Scope and Content

This collection contains forty-five letters pertaining to the Umbarger family that migrated from Lee County, Virginia to Cass County, Indiana shortly after the American Civil War. The dates of these letters range from 1863-1867 and 1870-1883, and are grouped into the following six sections of Civil War correspondence,

correspondence between siblings John and Mattie Umbarger, general family correspondence, business correspondence, poems, and empty envelopes.

The Civil War correspondence includes nine letters written between Umbarger family members and two letters written by Virginian confederate soldiers during the years of 1863-1867. Of the family letters, three are written between John Umbarger, a confederate soldier and his sister back home; four others are penned by Jonas Umbarger, a union supporter. In general, these letters discuss family and war news, food prices, the lack of work opportunities in Wythe County, and the hardships of soldier camp life. In a letter dating April 25, 1863, John Umbarger tells his sister that he has been barefoot for three weeks because of the difficulties involved in obtaining shoes. The letters also express a range of sentiments, from homesickness to the more unpleasant-- such as those found racist remarks. In a letter dated May 6th, 1866, Jonas Umbarger remarks to his sons and sister: " I am a union man [...] Lord save us from the abolitionist and from negro equality but I hope meanwhile have peace and constitution."

The general Umbarger family correspondence includes 38 letters written between siblings, John and Mattie, as well as letters between other family members and friends. These letters discuss family events, visits and other current events. In a letter to brother dated October 24th, 1880, Mattie complains about current politics: "ever man and woman and child that is bige enough to talk goes to Buraleyes & hollow for garfield and hancock I get tired enoough having them hollow-going along." Another interesting letter in this section contains a prose poem about a love gone sour in which various ingredients are given relationship attributes, such as "domestich industry forget me not true love" denotes "flax."

There are three letters in business correspondence. Written in 1870, the first is written by a Margaret Reder and addressed to John Umbarger at Bunker Hill, Virginia; it discusses the terms of renting a farm. The second one is written in Howard, Indiana in 1880 by Daniel Mcbolle and talks about terms of rent and job prospects. The third is a notice of a debt repaid and was written in Illinois a year later.

Of the seven short and simple poems in this collection, four are written in 1881 by Mattie Umbarger and focus on religious and romantic themes. One poem dated May 27th reads: Press forward, press forward

The Prize is in view, A crown of bright glory is waiting for you.

The other three poems are all undated and composed by non-family members.

Keywords

Civil War

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

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Arrangement

This collection is arranged by material type.

Description of Subordinate Components

Civil War correspondence

Unit Date 1863-1867

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

John & Mattie Umbarger correspondence

Unit Date 1877-1883

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

General family correspondence**Unit Date** 1876-1883**box-folder** 1 (box)**Container** 3 (folder)**Business correspondence****Unit Date** 1870, 1880-1881**box-folder** 1 (box)**Container** 4 (folder)**Poems****Unit Date** 1881**box-folder** 1 (box)**Container** 4 (folder)**Empty envelopes****box-folder** 1 (box)**Container** 4 (folder)