

Samuel F. Atwill papersMS.0061

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1862-1864

Title Statement

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Publication Statement

Publisher: Virginia Military Institute Archives

VMI Archives
Preston Library
Lexington, VA 24450
Business Number: 540-464-7516
archives@vmi.edu
URL: <http://www.vmi.edu/archives>

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-07-21 07:00:51 -0400.

Language Usage: Description is written in: Undetermined, Code for undetermined script script.

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MS.0061

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/135

Unit Date

1862-1864

Mixed Materials

1 (box)

Language

English

Creator

Atwill, Samuel F. (Samuel Francis), 1846-1864

Extent

4 items

Physical Location

Manuscripts stacks

Repository

Virginia Military Institute Archives

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

There are no restrictions.

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of William H. Atwill

Preferred Citation

Samuel F. Atwill papers, 1862-1864. MS 0061. VMI Archives, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia.

Biographical / Historical

Samuel Francis Atwill ("Frank") was born in Atwillton, Westmoreland County, Virginia on January 31, 1846 to Samuel Bailey Atwill and Jane Ann Broun. He matriculated at VMI on May 20, 1862. Two years later, while a Cadet Corporal in Company A, he took part in the Battle of New Market, Virginia (May 15, 1864) where he was mortally wounded. Atwill died on July 20, 1864 at the home of Dr. F. T. Stribling in Staunton, Virginia.

Scope and Contents

The Samuel F. Atwill papers consist of two letters (dated 1862) written by Cadet Atwill to his parents that relate anecdotes about life at VMI. The papers also include one letter (dated July 1864) from Superintendent Francis H. Smith that notifies the Atwill family of Cadet Atwill's death, and a fragment of Atwill's cadet account book.

Atwill was thoughtful and religious, and his letters also reflect a wonderful sense of humor. The letters contain amusing anecdotes about wartime cadet life, including a colorful account of cadets stealing chickens from a local farmer in order to supplement the basic mess hall fare (September 28 1862), and a story of students vying for the attention of a professor's "prettie daughters" (September 3, 1862). The letters also highlight the difficulty of wartime communication and the pain of separation from family. Although Cadet Atwill was wounded on May 15, 1864, his father did not receive the news until July, and he did not hear of his son's death until early August.

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865
New Market Cadets
New Market, Battle of, New Market, Va., 1864
Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1866
Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869
Lexington (Va.)—History—Civil War, 1861-1865
Account Books
Correspondence

Description of Subordinate Components

Account book fragment

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5336

Unit Date 1862 May 24

Language English

Scope and Contents

Two page account book fragment listing Samuel F. Atwill's school expenses.

Keywords

Account Books

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1866

Letter to Samuel B. Atwill

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5338

Unit Date 1862 September 2-3

Language English

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards exams, a request for money, and a story of students vying for the attention of a professor's "prettie daughters."

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1866

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Transcription

Letter to Jane A. Atwill (Broun)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5339

Unit Date 1862 September 28

Language English

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards family matters, cadet life, and an account of cadets stealing chickens from a local farmer in order to supplement the basic mess hall fare.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1866

Transcription

V.M. Institute Sept 28th, 1862

My dear Mother- In vain have I been looking for a letter from you now for a long time, but have not received one since Austin arrived, and I am getting quite uneasy about you all; but I hope that nothing is the matter with you all. I wrote to you (or Pa I should have said) Sunday before last, and I would have written to you last Sunday but but "circumstances alter cases" and I could not get an opportunity. How is your health getting? Oh! I hope you are perfectly well by this time. Is Cousins Magie and Betie staying with you now? If they are give my love to them and tell them that I answered their letters when I wrote to Pa. If they do not receive them you must let me know.

I suppose you get the papers now, and have seen an account of our great victories in Maryland, therefore I will not bother you with an account of them. Have you heard from Rennie since he left? Please let me know where I can direct my letters so as he may get them. How does Pa get on with the farm since he left?

Yesterday one of my roommates (as it was his time) went out in the country foraging and about 12 o'clock he came in with two very nice chickens with their heads looking like some one had hit them with a rock; well I was not with Morgan but I guess the chickens tried to hurt him and he had to hit them in self defense. Anyhow we had a very nice breakfast this morning in old 45 (no. of our room) of fried chicken, butter, and warm biscuits which I assure you was not at all objectionable, and I think from experience that the old saying is true that "stolen things always eat the sweetest."

Austin has quite gotten over his homesickness now and is very well; he is writing home also. I am in excellent health and spirits and hope before this reaches you, you may be enjoying the same blessing. I must now close as it is time to go in to Bible recitation. Please excuse this poor apology for a letter for my room is crowded, and you know I never could write where there was a noise. Tell cousin Sarah that I intended to write to her this evening but really I have not time and she will have to excuse me this time. Give my best love to her and tell her that if she knew how I am pressed with my studies she will excuse me. Give my love to all the family and all my relations; remember me also to all my inquiring friends.

You must not expect many letters from me now as I can't find time to write. I must now close; please write by every opportunity. Tell Mollie that I will write to her the first opportunity I have. Your devoted son, S.F. Atwill.

Letter from Francis H. Smith to Samuel B. Atwill**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/5340**Unit Date** 1864 July 28-29**Language** English**Creator** Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890**Scope and Contents**

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Superintendent Francis H. Smith wrote this letter to notify the Atwill family of Samuel F. Atwill's death.

Keywords

Correspondence

New Market, Battle of, New Market, Va., 1864

New Market Cadets

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1866

Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865

Atwill, Samuel F. (Samuel Francis), 1846-1864

Transcription

Va. Mil. Institute July 28, 1864

S. B. Atwill Esq. Montrose, Westmoreland Co., Virginia. My dear Sir, It is indeed with much pain I am called upon to announce to you the sudden death of your son. The intelligence has just reached me from my sister in Staunton. I copy that part of her letter

"Mr. Atwill died on Wednesday night and was buried on Thursday evening (21st). He was doing very well--went down to Harrisonburg on a visit, where he was thoughtless enough to take a cold bath, and returned here the next day, feeling quite unwell. He was taken with lockjaw--and notwithstanding it was feared and everything [done] to prevent it, nothing availed--and after three days of agony and suffering he died. In all his moments of quiet and reason, he expressed a perfect knowledge of his situation, and seemed to feel at peace. Ella Stribling nursed him day and night. Her father was away."

It is not surprising that he was at peace. The Sunday before the Battle of New Market, he united himself with the church here and had given evidence that he was indeed a child of God.

The Board of Visitors having directed that the remains of all the gallant youth who fell at the sanguinary Battle of New Market should be removed to the Institute, by the consent of the parents, it will afford us a mournful satisfaction to bury the remains of your son here, that they may be cared for, with the others to be deposited in our public cemetery.

With my heartfelt sympathy with you in your affliction. I remain very respectfully, Francis H. Smith, Superintendent

July 29. Cadet Brockenbrough the roommate of your lamented son has just handed me the enclosed letter from Miss Ella Stribling which I am sure will read by you with deep interest as it gives more fully the particulars.