

Thomas A. Stevenson papersMS.0175

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1860-1862

Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MS.0175

Unit ID

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Unit Date

1860-1862

Language

English .

Creator

Stevenson, Thomas A. (Thomas Andrew), 1841-?

Extent

5 items

Physical Location

Manuscripts stacks

Repository

Virginia Military Institute Archives

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

There are no restrictions.

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Preferred Citation

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Biographical / Historical

Thomas Andrew Stevenson was born in 1841 in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated VMI in 1864. During the Civil War he was a Sergeant with the 8th Virginia Infantry Regiment, Confederate States of America. After the War he was a lawyer in Missouri.

Scope and Contents

The Thomas A. Stevenson papers consist of the papers (five items) Stevenson, including: Three letters (1860) from Stevenson (known as Andrew) to his sister Maria Stevenson in which he discusses the possibility of war, the celebration of Washington's birthday, and war preparation activities at VMI following the announcement of Virginia's secession One Confederate War Department visitor's pass (dated November 11, 1861) that allows Maria Stevenson to travel to Norfolk, Virginia One letter (dated March 27, 1862) that introduces Stevenson to Major Taylor and recommends him for drillmaster duties

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864
Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865
Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869
United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865
Secession
Correspondence

Description of Subordinate Components

Letter to Maria Stevenson

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5426

Unit Date 1860 November 20

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter discusses the possibility of war.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Transcription

V. M. I. Lexington Nov 20th 1860

My Dear Sister Your affectionate letter has been received and would have been answered immediately had not circumstances so conspired as to render it impossible.

You question very gravely as to the part we will take in the civil contest should one ensue in consequence of the election of the abols [abolitionist] nominee. The part that we will take Dear Sister will be forced in a measure upon us, by recurring [referring] to your map. You will notice that our geographical position is such that should the enemy cross from Ohio this (Lex) would be their first point of attack; for all other places west of this, they are little better than abolitionist. Besides our magazine and arsenal would naturally excite their cupidity, the latter of which two, is located in the centre of Barracks. Consequently you see that should they attempt the invasion this would be the first field of battle and in making the attack resistance on our part would be necessarily and honorably called for which in consequence would render fair Lexington the first picture in the bloody scene of devastation.

You ask in the same breath if I would take part in this contingency and endeavour to persuade me to the contrary. My Dear Sister I propose answering this question by venturing the following consideration. On entering the Institute as a Cadet I have sworn as it were allegiance to a constitution peculiar to the Institute and independent of the general government. And when I consider the former [modeled] by the government constitution in its purity and at the time confined to legitimate limits under its authority this I will abide by when the general government shall have been perverted by ambitious and designing men for personal sectional interest. And since I enjoy the privilege and protection the Institute affords I am as you will admit honorably bound to defend its interest when infringed on by the corrupt and aggressive government.

And another consideration is in defending this point- I am assisting to defend a place where a treasure far beyond my life is deposited. I know the enemy will not be rash enough to attack you by sea since your water fortification are so extensive. This reflection consoles me greatly for your safety at home. And moreover by making an effectual resistance here we will be the means of protecting the eastern portion of the state if not routing the enemy in general. So you see my Dear Sister I am compelled first in consideration of the safety of those I have at home and secondly the obligation that so honorably bind me to protect the establishment that affords me the means of assisting to protect you and myself.

All I have said Dear Sister amounts to a mere probability. Believe me there will be no such issue as these extravagant fanatics prophesy. We consider it here as trifling talk, but have prepared in case of an emergency. We have commenced the skirmish drill and cartridges have been distributed to the amount of twenty five hundred. But believe me in the whole it will amount to nothing.

If my letter is uninteresting you cannot blame me. The nature of your question called for it. At present I am in good health and fine spirits--only wanting a heavy pair of gloves to walk post in to make me contented. I have received a letter from Chas. Smith. What he says is unimportant. My love to all and believe me your Brother devoted, Andrew.

P. S. Tell Sister Mary that since I came to reflect I think the Express would be the way that would cause her the less inconvenience and perhaps would be safest. The expense will be paid here.

Letter to Maria Stevenson

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5427

Unit Date 1861 February 23

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards the celebration of Washington's birthday and cadet life.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet debating societies

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Transcription

I earnestly request that this be burnt as soon as read V. M. I. Lexington Feb 23d 1861

My Dear Sister I received your dear letter some days back and am sorry it was not in my power to reply sooner. I am much indebted for the entertaining style of your last. I am unable to describe the effect it had. Your good humor or scandle as you are pleased to term it went well to destroy the monotony of the time. It encouraged in me such a feeling [of] pleasantry that I was unable to content myself with being the only participant and turned to my friend sitting by, whose attention had been attracted by my involuntary and almost spasmodic laughter, and allowed him to read some of your pleasant remarks. He seemed to enjoy the humor with equal good taste. You will excuse this liberty when you learn the motive which prompted it.

Christmas here as every festivity of the kind passed off quite pleasant, not to mention the occurrence of several cases of lager beer distemper necessary as you are aware among so many. It has now been a considerable time since Christmas passed and what occurred on the occasion fails my memory to some extent. I have faint recollection of a smashing dinner though was unable to participate with satisfaction remembering those less favored.

Yesterday we celebrated the anniversary of the birth of Washington. At daybreak thirteen guns were fired in commemoration and a general jubilee followed throughout the day. Grand doings were carried on by the two societies to one of which I am attached. By invitation the whole corps marched under arms to a church engaged for the occasion, where complimentary addresses were delivered on the memory and character of Washington by representatives of four societies, two of the Institute and two of Washington College in the neighborhood.

On returning from the church we repaired to the Mess Hall where a dinner the most sumptuous I ever witnessed was served up to a hungry crew. After dinner about three hours was employed in toast making

and short speeches on the part of invited guests, of which there were a great number. This was followed by a dance which was kept up until after night, when the jubilee was ended by a magnificent display of fireworks.

Cousin D's informant is rather careless of the truth. No such excitement prevails. Alas! poor Tom I lament his fate, but am not surprised at what occasioned so dire a calamity. I admire your military skill. I think our [word not clear] cousin would make a fine breast work to command the harbor entrance. Friend John I see [swells] on the dignity of Church collection. I am rather inclined to think that he had little to say with regard to the cut and material of his sparrow tail. A coat of that shape in this season of the fashion looks rather suspicious. One would be lead to believe it a generous donation from some liberal hearted Christian. [Not insinuating] I am of the opinion.

Charlie White is a wicked fellow not writing to his sister. I will let him know that it has been noticed when I see him again. I wonder if the new edition of Blackstone would stand a revision. I am inclined to think if it was not proved to be fictitious it would on examination result in a defunct. Success to my friend Ned with this piece of advice to be careful that the pigs mouth is well [stuffed? stopped?]. The same white head individual is the ex cadet Grandy. I thought better of the people of Norfolk than to represent themselves through Geo. Blow. My Dear Sister I am ashamed to send this but when you learn that the mail boy is standing by my side waiting for my letter you will excuse my miserable writing and hasty composition. I will detail my studies in my letter to sister Mary. Your Affectionate Brother Andrew

P. S. A disunion flag was raised secretly yesterday morning on one of the towers and the bollards cut so as the stripes couldn't go up by three cadets.

Letter to Maria Stevenson

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5428

Unit Date 1861 April 19

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards war preparation activities at VMI following the announcement of Virginia's secession.

Keywords

Correspondence

Secession

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Transcription

V. M. I. Lexington April 19th/61

My Dear Sister I was gratified with the reception of Sister M's letter on yesterday. It was a wish to await her answer to my last before replying to yours that has caused the delay on my part for which I am I must confess deservedly rebuked in your short but [pathetic] and expressive sentence "why don't you answer my letter." I beg pardon dear Sister for I see from your tone your good humor is not a little provoked for my unwarrantable indulgence and pledge more strict attention for the future.

Great excitement prevails here since the reception of the secession ordinance (on which occasion fifteen guns were fired as a salute of honor). All academic duties have been suspended if not thrown aside with the intention never to be resumed. Military instruction constitutes the order of the day. We drill from five in the morning until dusk with slight intermissions.

Col. Smith has been ordered to Richmond to report for special duty. Several cadets have been ordered by the governor to report in different sections of the state to drill recruits. It is thought more will be sent on tomorrow. The place about presents a most busy aspect. Arms are being carried from the arsenal during the entire day to supply the militia and volunteers of the county. Two companies equipped for service passed here on route for Washington. It was quite touching to see the wives and children following after. Our entire second class are employed in making cartridges. Our tents are being repaired and every warlike preparation is being made. We are under orders to hold ourselves in readiness. You must not be alarmed at what I have said. I have thought it best to be candid. I shall write to you frequently that is if my purse will afford. I am so fatigued from my exercise today that I am scarcely able to drag my pen across the paper. I would beg excuse for my careless composition with a promise to do better when I am more refreshed. My love to my mother and sisters. Kiss D for me. Your affect Bro., Andrew

Destroy this as soon as read. I am so fatigued that I am unable to do better.

Confederate visitor's pass

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5429

Unit Date 1861 November 11

Language English.

Scope and Contents

A Confederate War Department visitor's pass that allows Maria Stevenson to travel to Norfolk, Virginia.

Keywords

United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865

Letter from R. Taylor to R. C. Taylor

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5430

Unit Date 1862 March 27

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from Norfolk, Virginia. Letter introduces Thomas A. Stevenson to Major Taylor and recommends him for drillmaster duties.

Keywords

Correspondence

United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865—Personal narratives—Confederate Stevenson, Thomas A. (Thomas Andrew), 1841-?

Transcription

Hd. Qrs. 2d Brigade Vol. Norfolk, Va. March 27th, 1862

Major R. C. Taylor Comg. & c Georgia Barracks

Major I beg to introduce to your acquaintance for assignment to any duty you may think proper Cadet T. Andrew Stevenson of the Virginia M. Institute. He is anxious to render some service to the Confederacy and desires to avail himself of the furlough which has been granted him to assist you in the drilling and organization of the troops under your command. I am Major, Very truly & c, R. Taylor