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Guide to MS-287: Whitney Family Civil War Letters



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Danielle Russell Class of 2025, Brian C. Pohanka Intern
June 2022

MS-287: Whitney Family Civil War Letters

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Size

1 box, 0.25 cubic feet

Location

Special Collections

Dates

Inclusive: 1862 - 1866

Bulk: 1863 - 1865

Provenance

This collection was gifted to Gettysburg College in June 2022 by Edson Whitney, 2nd-great-grandson of Mariner T. Whitney and 2nd-great-nephew of Hiram R. Whitney.

Biographical Note

Mariner Thompson Whitney was born on June 1, 1825, in Schenectady, New York. Two years later, in 1827, his parents, Marcus Fayette Whitney (1794-1830) and Mary Ann Stayner (1801-1858) relocated the family to Poughkeepsie, New York. In 1848, Mariner married Ruhamah Wilcox Irwin (1826-1890). According to the 1860 Census, Mariner worked as a stone cutter, making countertops and headstones. He did not serve in the Civil War, although his younger brother Hiram did. Mariner died at age 77, in Port Jervis, New York, on November 18, 1902.

Hiram "Harry" Reed Whitney, the younger brother of Mariner Thompson Whitney, was born in 1830 in Poughkeepsie, New York. He was baptized by the Episcopal Diocese of New York on October 12, 1831. In the years preceding the Civil War, he worked as a butcher. On August 5, 1862, he enlisted as a Private in Company F of the 132nd New York Infantry. At the time, he was five feet five and one-half inches tall, with a fair complexion, brown hair, and blue eyes. The 132nd served mostly in North Carolina, where it suffered more than ninety casualties at the Battle of New Bern(e). Hiram was mustered out as a Corporal in Salisbury, North Carolina, on June 29, 1865, at the age of thirty-five. A little less than fourteen years later, he died from "stricture of the urethra" on June 4, 1879, at age forty-nine. The funeral was held at one o'clock, at 142 East 84th Street, New York, the home of his older sister Louisa Lenox Whitney Wright. His remains were interred in Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York. His grave is shared with Charles W. Wright (1827-Oct. 29, 1870). It is lot 17263, Section 15, Grave 149. Wright was the husband of his older sister, Louisa Lenox Whitney (1827-1893).

Ann Almira Whitney Manning, the older sister of Mariner Thompson Whitney and Hiram “Harry” Reed Whitney, was born on March 21, 1820, in Quebec, Canada. By the time she was one year old, her family had moved to Schenectady, New York. She died sometime in late September or early October 1864, before October 14, 1864, when her brother Hiram wrote that he had learned of her death. Very little information is known about her life, other than the fact she married Henry J. Manning on an unknown date, and that she wrote several letters to her brother Mariner during the Civil War. A letter written by her husband, Henry J. Manning, during his service with “Scott’s 900,” the Eleventh New York Volunteer Cavalry, is included in this collection. At the time Henry Manning wrote the letter, he was serving in Donaldsonville, Louisiana. He enlisted in the regiment on February 1, 1862, as a private in Co. G. One year later, he was appointed sergeant and transferred to Co. L on February 14, 1863. After being appointed saddler sergeant on June 11, 1865, he was mustered out shortly afterwards, at Memphis, Tennessee, on July 21, 1865.¹ Henry Manning was born in 1820 in Ireland, and died in 1884, in Kendallville, Indiana, having married Theresa Dean after his wife Ann’s death.

Louisa Lennox Whitney was born in 1827 in Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, New York, the daughter of Marcus Fayette Whitney and Mary Whitney. She was the younger sister of Ann Almira Whitney Manning and the older sister of Hiram Reed Whitney. She was baptized on October 12, 1831. In 1849, she married Charles Washington Wright (1825-1868), son of the famed engraver and one of the first American medalists, Charles Cushing Wright (1796-1854). Her son, Charles Lennox Wright (1852-1901) was born on March 9, 1852. Her husband died at the age of forty-three years old, when she was forty-one years old, on September 25, 1868. Despite her estrangement from her brother Hiram in 1864-1865, she allowed her brother to be buried in her husband’s plot in Green-Wood Cemetery, and hosted the funeral at her home. She died at the age of sixty-four years old, in 1891.

John Marsh Young was born on February 12, 1841, in New York. His father was Isaac Young (1809-1885), and his mother, Hannah Maria Irwin (1811-1882), was the older sister of Ruhamah Wilcox Whitney, making him nephew to Ruhamah and her husband, Mariner Thompson Whitney. In 1850, the Young family was living in Minisink, Orange County, New York, but by 1855, the family had relocated to Deerpark, Orange County, New York. On August 11, 1862, John M. Young enlisted in the 124th New York Infantry. According to the New York Muster Roll Abstracts, he was five feet five inches tall, with a fair complexion, light hair, and grey eyes. At the time of his enlistment, he was employed as a miller. On June 3, 1865, Corporal John M. Young was mustered out with his regiment near Washington, D.C. On an unknown date, he married Esther Ennes. They had two daughters, Mabel Ennes Young and Eva Young Cooper. John Marsh Young died on December 11, 1911, at the age of seventy.

¹ From the Unit Roster of the 11th New York Volunteer Cavalry.

Historical Note

This collection contains letters relating to the military service of the 11th New York Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, 124th New York Infantry, and 132nd New York Infantry Regiments during the Civil War. The 11th mainly served in Louisiana.² The 124th New York Infantry, known as the “Orange Blossoms,” fought in a variety of Virginia engagements.³ The 132nd New York Infantry, the “Hillhouse Light Infantry,” saw action in Virginia and North Carolina.⁴

Scope and Content Note

The Whitney Family Civil War Letters collection contains 46 letters from the Civil War Era, 2 Freemason dues notices for Mariner T. Whitney, and four empty letter covers. 37 of the letters, written by Hiram R. Whitney, pertain to his military service and daily life with the 132nd New York Infantry Regiment. Two other letters, written by Henry J. Manning and John Marsh Young relate to their military service with the 11th New York Volunteer Cavalry and the 124th New York Infantry, respectively. John Marsh Young was the nephew of Ruhamah Irwin Whitney, the wife of Mariner T. Whitney. The remaining letters, written by Ann Almira Whitney Manning and Louisa Lennox Whitney Wright to their brother, Mariner, relate to various family concerns.

Subjects

Civil War, New York, Infantry, Union, Union Army, North Carolina, Battle of Petersburg, Freemasons

Series Description

This collection is divided into 5 Series. All letters, except for one, include dates. The letters have been sorted by date. The postmark is included if available. **Series 1:** Hiram Reed Whitney Letters, **Series 2:** Ann Almira Whitney Manning Letters, **Series 3:** Mariner Whitney Freemason dues notices, **Series 4:** Assorted Civil War Era Letters, **Series 5:** Empty letter covers/envelopes

Box list

Series I: Hiram Reed Whitney Letters

1-0 Finding Aid and Research Materials

1-1 Hiram Whitney 1862 letters

- Oct. 13, 1862, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Suffolk, Virginia
- Nov. 6, 1862, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Suffolk, Virginia

² “11th Cavalry Regiment” New York State Military Museum and Veterans Resource Center, New York State Museum, <https://museum.dmna.ny.gov/unit-history/cavalry/11th-cavalry-regiment>.

³ “124th Infantry Regiment,” New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center, New York State Museum, <https://museum.dmna.ny.gov/unit-history/infantry-2/124th-infantry-regiment>.

⁴ “132nd Infantry Regiment,” New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center, New York State Museum, <https://museum.dmna.ny.gov/unit-history/infantry-2/132nd-infantry-regiment>.

- Nov. 25, 1862, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Suffolk, Virginia
- Dec. 7, 1862, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Suffolk, Virginia
 - o Includes cover, postmarked Dec. 8, 1862, in Norfolk, Virginia

1-2 Hiram Whitney 1863 letters

- Jan. 11, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from New Buren [sic], North Carolina
- Jan. 27, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Camp Near New Buren [sic], North Carolina
 - o Includes cover, postmarked Feb. 2, 1863, in New Bern, North Carolina
- Feb. 27, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Camp Hitchcocke [sic] Newbern [sic], North Carolina
 - o Postmarked Mar. 4, 1863, in New Bern, North Carolina
- Mar. 11, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Camp Hitchcocke [sic] Newbern [sic], North Carolina
 - o Cover is torn; no stamp or postmark
- Mar. 27, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern [sic], N.C.
 - o Has small extra stamp
- Apr. 12, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern [sic], N.C.
- Apr. 26, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern, N.C.
 - o Has additional ½ piece of paper with writing
 - o Postmarked Apr. [illegible – too faint], 1863, in Newbern, N.C.
- May 12, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern [sic], N.C.
- May 19, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern [sic], N.C.
 - o Postmarked May 20, 1863, in Newbern [sic], North Carolina
- May 29, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern [sic], N.C.
- Jun. 9, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern [sic], N.C.
- Sep. 13, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern [sic], NC, Bachelors Creek, Camp Hoffman out post
- Dec. 13, 1863, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern, NC

1-3 Hiram Whitney 1864 letters

- Apr. 4, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Camp Hoffman, Bachelors Creek out post, Newbern [sic], NC
- Jun. 25, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Bachelors Creek out post, New Bern, NC
- Jul. 16, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Bachelors Creek, Newberen [sic], NC
- Sep. 3, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Newbern, NC
 - o Letter is torn in half, bottom half is missing

- Sep. 12, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Bachelors Creek Out Post, Newbern, N.C.
- Oct. 2, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from New bern, NC, Bachelors Creek outpost
 - o Postmarked Oct. 5, 1864, in New Bern, NC
- Oct. 23, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Camp Classen Out post, Newbern, NC
- Nov. 27, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Camp Classen Out post, Newbern, NC
- Dec. 13, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Bachelors Creek
 - o Postmarked Dec. 15, 1864, in New Berne, NC
- Dec. 26, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from New bern, NC
 - o Postmarked Dec. 27, 1864, in New Bern, NC
- Dec. 30, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Camp Classen Outpost, Newbern, NC
 - o Postmarked Dec. 31, 1864, in New Bern, NC

1-4 Hiram Whitney 1865 letters

- Feb. 2, 1865, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Camp Classen Outpost, New bern, NC
- Feb. 7, 1865, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Camp Classen Outpost, New bern, NC
- Mar. 29, 1865, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Goelsdboro [sic], NC
- Apr. 7, 1865, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from HeadQuarters [sic], Army of the Ohio
- Apr. 15, 1865, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Raligh [sic], N.C.
- Apr. 19, 1865, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Religh, NC
- June 2, 1865, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Salisbury, NC
- June 6, 1865, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Salisbury, NC

Series II: Ann Almira Whitney Manning Letters

1-5 Letters to Mariner Whitney from Ann Almira Whitney Manning

- Jul. 17, 186_?, letter to Mariner T. Whitney
- Jul. 13, 1862, letter to Mariner T. Whitney
 - o Postmarked _ 19, in New York
- Oct. 29, 1862, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, sent from Hear-lem [sic]
- Apr. 10, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney
 - o Postmarked Apr. 11, 1864, in New York
- Apr. 23, 18_?, letter to Mariner T. Whitney

Series III: Mariner Whitney Freemason dues notices

1-6 Mariner Whitney Freemason dues notices

- 1865 Freemason dues notice
- 1866 Freemason dues notice

Series IV: Assorted Civil War Era Letters

1-7 Miscellaneous Civil War Letters

- 1 page of a letter with an unknown author/date; possibly by Hiram Whitney
- Jun. 27, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, from Sgt. Henry J. Manning of the 11th NY Vol. Cavalry, sent from Hermitage Plantation, Donaldsonville, Louisiana
- Oct. 22, 1864, letter to Mariner T. Whitney, from John Marsh Young of the 124th NY Infantry, sent from Camp Near Petersburg, Virginia

Series V: Empty letter covers/envelopes

1-8 Empty letter covers (envelopes)

- Empty cover from letter to Mariner T. Whitney, postmarked Mar. 31, from New Bern, NC
- Empty cover from letter to Mariner T. Whitney, postmarked Aug. 5, 1863, from New Bern, NC
- Empty cover from letter to Mariner T. Whitney, missing stamp and postmark

Sources

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