

**The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

William Frothingham

Papers, 1861-1935

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Summary

Main Entry: William Frothingham

Title: Papers, 1861-1935

Size: .25 linear ft. (1 box)

Source: Gift of Sheldon Potter III (grandson), 1946, 1947

Biographical Statement: William Frothingham was a physician serving with the Army of the Potomac.

Description: Civil War military medical records, personal and professional correspondence, and family papers, mostly of a genealogical nature, concerning William Frothingham, his brother Edward Frothingham, and collateral relatives.

Biographical Note

William Walter Frothingham was born on 12 May 1830, the sixth child (of ten) of John Frost Frothingham and Jane Ann Dodge, in Johnstown, New York. After working at several jobs, including as a pharmacist, he began the study of medicine with a local physician in April 1850. In October of the following year, he came to New York City to study surgery. Completing his studies in 1854, he joined the staff of Bellevue Hospital, taking a brief leave to study in Europe (April 1856 - February 1857). In September 1858, he married Margaret Hunter Phinney, and went into private practice, first in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and later (at his wife's urging) in New York City.

The period of Frothingham's life that is best reported in the papers begins in October 1861, when Frothingham was commissioned as Assistant Surgeon in the 44th New York Volunteer Regiment. Serving with the Army of the Potomac during McClellan's Peninsular Campaign, Frothingham saw considerable active service, and was present at the Battle of Malvern Hill (1 July 1862), where he was mentioned in dispatches. He later served under General John Pope at Second Bull Run (28-29 August 1862). Frothingham left the army in mid to late 1862 under circumstances that remain obscure, but were certainly contentious. After the war, he returned to private practice in the Washington Heights section of New York City, where he remained until his death on 19 November 1885. His death was the result of an accident involving his old Army pistol.

The Frothingham Papers also contain several items concerning William's brother Edward, the youngest of the Frothingham children. Edward also studied medicine, and served in the Civil War as a surgeon, but no further details of his Civil War career are recorded. At the end of the war, Edward transferred to the Navy, and served as assistant surgeon on the USS *Oneida* in the Pacific. He drowned on 24 January 1870, when the *Oneida* was rammed and sunk by a British steamer off Yokohama.

Much of the interest of the papers stems from the Frothingham family's connection with the Dodge, Frost, and Irving families (Washington Irving was William's and Edward's great-uncle). A great deal of other biographical material is contained in a detailed genealogical note by a nephew, John Pierre Frothingham, which is included in the collection.

Scope and Content Note

The William Frothingham Papers contain materials on two related but distinct topics: the military/medical career of William Frothingham, and the genealogy of the entire Frothingham family. The Frothingham papers are particularly informative on the medical organization of the Union Army during the early part of the Civil War since they document in considerable detail the responsibilities and actions of an Army surgeon at a time of unprecedented expansion in the US military. John Pierre Frothingham's notes and research demonstrate the social milieu and status of American literary figures in the nineteenth century; for example, Washington Irving was instrumental in having an elder Frothingham brother accepted for admission to West Point.

Contents

1. Medical Records of the 44th New York Volunteer Regiment. Quarterly and monthly mortality and morbidity reports; regimental morning reports, notes used to generate the various reports; related correspondence. Materials cover the period from November 1861 to May 1862.
2. Medical Supply Records. Requisitions, receipts, etc. for medical supplies ordered by William Frothingham in his official capacity as military surgeon. For the same time period as above.
3. General Military Correspondence. Letters, general orders, passes, and misc. papers concerning William Frothingham's military career. Includes his commission in the 44th New York, oath of office, and some correspondence concerning his separation from the Army. Also includes dispatches from Lieutenant Colonel James Rice of the 44th New York praising Frothingham's conduct at the battle of Malvern Hill. October 1861 - May 1863.
4. Personal Correspondence. Letters from the field to family and friends. Most of the letters are to Frothingham's wife Margaret. Also included are more formal items written to describe conditions during the Peninsular Campaign, possibly for publication in a hometown newspaper. A copy of the Johnstown (NY) *Independent* for 11 September 1862 containing such a report is included. November 1861 - September 1862.
5. Papers of Edward Frothingham. Letters and papers relating to the youngest brother of William Frothingham. Included are letters concerning Edward's Civil War service and his discharge from the Army. November 1861 - June 1865.
6. "Genealogy and History of the Frothingham Family & Connections," by John Pierre Frothingham. Boxed typescript documenting the history of the family. 135 pages, dated 1935.
7. Misc. Genealogical Notes. Materials gathered by John Pierre Frothingham while researching his family history. Typed and ms. letters, newspapers clippings, etc. Includes stereograph of William Frothingham (?) in Civil War uniform, and copy print of Samuel Phinney, John P. Frothingham's maternal grandfather.