



The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Harry Rockafellar letters

1860-1875

MssCol 17944

Summary

Creator: Rockafellar, Harry, 1840-1875

Title: Harry Rockafellar letters

Date: 1860-1875

Size: .2 linear feet (1 box)

Abstract: Harry Rockafellar (1840-1875) was an American merchant, Civil War veteran, and commanding Colonel of the 71st Regiment, New York State National Guard, from 1869 to 1872. Harry Rockafellar was the son of Mary M. and Asa J. Rockafellar of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He resided in New York City prior to the Civil War, and enlisted in the 71st N.Y.N.G. at its outbreak, serving in Company F. Rockafellar was severely wounded at the battle of First Manassas, resulting in the amputation of his left arm and capture by the Confederates. He spent several months in Liggon's Tobacco Warehouse, a hospital and prison in Richmond, Virginia. He served in other units after his exchange, notably as a Captain in the U.S. Army Invalid Corps (Veteran Reserve Corps). After the war, Rockafellar worked in New York City as an importer and commission merchant in the clothing trade. He maintained his connection with the 71st N.Y.N.G., serving as commanding Colonel of the regiment from 1869-1872. He married Jenny L. Baker, daughter of Alfred E. Baker, a New York City fire marshal, in 1867. Harry Rockafellar died in Orange, N.J. in 1875. The collection consists of letters written by Harry Rockafellar, 1860-1875, reflecting his Civil War service, his business travels abroad, and his personal and family life, as well as a small amount of related correspondence, photographs, writings and miscellaneous personal items. Most of the letters are written to his mother, Mary M. Rockafellar; other recipients include family members and his future father-in-law, Alfred E. Baker. Wartime letters, 1861-1864, with mention of camp life, social activities, and family matters, mainly document his wounding and capture at battle of First Manassas and his life as a prisoner of war in Richmond, Virginia, in 1861, and his duties as an Invalid Corps officer, 1863-1864, while stationed in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Also present are Rockafellar's 19 Nov. 1861 letter to the editor of a Philadelphia newspaper concerning prisoner exchange, and a letter of appreciation dated 7 Jan. 1862 from Congressman Alfred Ely, a fellow former prisoner. Postwar letters concern his marriage to Jenny L. Baker in 1867; three business trips to Europe in 1871, 1872 and 1873; his health; and his mother's well-being and financial affairs. Business travels took him mainly to Manchester, London, and Paris. The 1872 trip, taken with his wife Jenny, is extensively described in their separate letters to his mother and uncle. Notable content includes seven letters written 1861 July 26-Oct. 1 as a prisoner of war, and his letter of 27 July 1871 describing conditions in Paris in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War and the

Paris Commune. Photographs include an 1862 carte-de-visite of Harry Rockafellar in uniform, and a later portrait; a carte-de-visite of Alfred E. Baker in his uniform as fire marshal, 1865; and a photograph of Sudley Church, Bull Run (Brady's Album Gallery no. 315). Writings include an undated 5-page typescript of reminiscences recalling his encounters with President Abraham Lincoln, while on guard duty in Washington, D.C., at Fort Stevens, in a personal interview, and as part of the guard of honor over his remains; and an 1868 offprint of the report of the Seventy-First Regiment's Civil War service submitted by Lt. Col. Rockafellar to the Adjutant General of the State of New York. Personal miscellany includes Rockafellar's wedding announcement and business card, and seven specimens of 19th-century Confederate, U.S. and Canadian paper currency.

Conditions Governing Access:

Access to paper currency is restricted; photocopies are supplied in lieu of the originals.

Preferred citation: Harry Rockafellar letters, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Harry Rockafellar (1840-1875) was an American merchant, Civil War veteran, and commanding Colonel of the 71st Regiment, New York State National Guard, from 1869 to 1872. Harry Rockafellar was the son of Mary M. and Asa J. Rockafellar of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He resided in New York City prior to the Civil War, and enlisted in the 71st N.Y.N.G. at its outbreak, serving in Company F. Rockafellar was severely wounded at the battle of First Manassas, resulting in the amputation of his left arm and capture by the Confederates. He spent several months in Liggon's Tobacco Warehouse, a hospital and prison in Richmond, Virginia. He served in other units after his exchange, notably as a Captain in the U.S. Army Invalid Corps (Veteran Reserve Corps). After the war, Rockafellar worked in New York City as an importer and commission merchant in the clothing trade. He maintained his connection with the 71st N.Y.N.G., serving as commanding Colonel of the regiment from 1869-1872. He married Jenny L. Baker, daughter of Alfred E. Baker, a New York City fire marshal, in 1867. Harry Rockafellar died in Orange, N.J. in 1875.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of letters written by Harry Rockafellar, 1860-1875, reflecting his Civil War service, his business travels abroad, and his personal and family life, as well as a small amount of related correspondence, photographs, writings and miscellaneous personal items. Most of the letters are written to his mother, Mary M. Rockafellar; other recipients include family members and his future father-in-law, Alfred E. Baker. Wartime letters, 1861-1864, with mention of camp life, social activities, and family matters, mainly document his wounding and capture at battle of First Manassas and his life as a prisoner of war in Richmond, Virginia, in 1861, and his duties as an Invalid Corps officer, 1863-1864, while stationed in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Also present are Rockafellar's 19 Nov. 1861 letter to the editor of a Philadelphia newspaper concerning prisoner exchange, and a letter of appreciation dated 7 Jan. 1862 from Congressman Alfred Ely, a fellow former prisoner. Postwar letters concern his marriage to Jenny L. Baker in 1867; three business trips to Europe in 1871, 1872 and 1873; his health; and his mother's well-being and financial affairs. Business travels took him mainly to Manchester, London, and Paris. The 1872 trip, taken with his wife Jenny, is extensively described in their separate letters to his mother and uncle. Notable content includes seven letters written 1861 July 26-Oct. 1 as a prisoner of war, and his letter of 27 July 1871 describing conditions in Paris in the

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Arrangement: Letters are in chronological order

Key Terms

Subjects

Bull Run, 1st Battle of, Va., 1861

Geographic Names

Europe -- Description and travel

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

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Prisoners and prisons

Occupations

Merchants

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs

Soldiers

Names

Rockafellar, Harry, 1840-1875

Ely, Alfred, 1815-1892

Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865

Rockafellar, Jenny L

Rockafellar, Mary M

Liggon's Tobacco Warehouse Prison (Richmond, Va.)

New York (State). National Guard. Regiment, 71st

United States. Army. Invalid Corps

United States. Army. Veteran Reserve Corps