



The Historical  
Society of  
Pennsylvania

Collection 3066

**Samuel S. Kapp**  
Family papers

1861-1863, n.d.

1 box (6 folders), 0.2 lin. feet

**Contact:** The Historical Society of Pennsylvania  
1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Phone: (215) 732-6200 FAX: (215) 732-2680  
<http://www.hsp.org>

**Processed by:** Mary Kirk  
**Processing Completed:** August 2005  
**Restrictions:** None

---

**Samuel S. Kapp**  
**Family papers, 1861-1863, n.d.**  
**1 box, 0.2 lin. feet**

**Collection 3066**

---

### **Abstract**

At the age of eighteen, Samuel Selen Kapp, son of Martin and Elizabeth Kapp, joined Pennsylvania's 10<sup>th</sup> Reserve, 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Company E, and left Fryburg, in western Pennsylvania to fight for the Union Army. Kapp's paternal family and maternal line (the Sigworths) were descendants of German emigrants who, in 1816, purchased and developed land, establishing the town of Fryburg, 90 miles north of Pittsburgh. Kapp grew up learning English and the Pennsylvania Dutch language common to rural German communities.

While serving in the Army of the Potomac from 1861 to his death at the battle of Bull Run in 1862, Kapp wrote letters to his family which captures the gamut of his army experiences. Although these letters reflect his limited education, they also demonstrate his ability to offer detailed and lively observations of landscape and camp life as well as the rigors and horror of battle. Of the thirty-three letters in the collection, twenty-seven were written by Kapp to his parents and family.

### **Scope & content**

The letters to his father, Martin Kapp, from various correspondents, include one from Chaplain Joseph M. Driver, who reported on Kapp's wounding, leg amputation, and subsequent death on September 22, 1862. Martin Kapp's nephews, also serving in the Union army, wrote to him with news of his son, or shared political opinions and views of the war's progress. A typed transcription of all the letters, except for a short, partially dated note from Kapp to his parents, is also included in the collection. In addition to letters, the collection contains a carte de visite of Kapp which indicates his age as 18, as well as various ephemera, including a booklet prepared by the U.S. Christian Commission, *Parting Words for Our Soldiers*, offering advice to soldiers returning to civilian life. Included also are a number of envelopes bearing military and patriotic scenes, some confederate currency, and a military map of Maryland and Virginia.

Samuel Kapp's letters, written during his first year of service, reflect his exuberance at seeing the world beyond Fryburg. Writing from Washington, D.C. on August 8, 1861 to his family he told them: "But you could not coax me away from here nor how you fix it

for I like it better than home. I have seen a good many things that I never would if I would have staid at home.” Despite the excitement of being separated from his family, however, Kapp corresponded regularly with his parents, whom he often addressed as “Respected Parents.”

Kapp believed the war would end quickly, as expressed in a letter of August 11, 1861 to his parents: “The general opinion is that the war will end in about 6 or 10 months on the out side.” In his letters of 1861, written from various camps in Virginia or from Washington, D.C., Kapp expressed excitement at the vast panorama of men and equipment, described the rigors of camp life, its strict regulations, as well as its boredom - broken by the excitement of capturing the occasional sniper. In addition, Kapp’s letters at this time noted the beauty of the countryside, remarking to his parents in an April 30, 1861, letter from Catlett’s Station (Virginia): “I wish you had a farm here for it is such a delightful place. The peach trees are in full bloom and the blossoms on the apple trees are all out but not quite expanded yet.”

A Union victory still appeared imminent to Kapp, as expressed in his letter of February 11, 1862: “I think the war will soon be at an end for the rebels are losing ground every day.” Despite hardships detailed in the following months--camping without tent or fire in cold, rainy conditions, poor food, and inconclusive battles, Kapp continued to trust in a Union victory. On May 6, 1862, with Kapp’s regiment along the Rappahannock River, opposite Fredricksburg and south of Richmond, Kapp assured his parents that Richmond “certainly must fall” under the combined forces of Generals Bank, McDowel, and McClellan. Of the indecisive fighting in and around Fredericksburg at that time, Kapp reported, in a letter of May 22, 1862, only that “we have passed through trying times in the last four days” Kapp completed this letter with a description of their regiment’s review by President Lincoln, the Secretary of War and several generals.

In early June 1862 Kapp and his regiment boarded a steamship as part of their move to reinforce McClellan below Richmond. Kapp, in a letter of June 18, named the various rivers; the distance navigated on each of them, and described the memories of home evoked by the countryside. In his next letter, dated July 31, 1862, he answered his parents’ inquiry about his battle experiences. After describing his regiment’s position, strategy, and artillery exchanges, Kapp offered a criticism of war’s effect on men: “A man in battle is worse than a brute. He loses all feeling and cares for nothing at all.”

Kapp’s final letter to his parents, written from Columbia Hospital in Washington, D.C. and dated September 1862 described his regiment’s march to Manassas, his wounding in battle, as well as his capture—for ten days—by rebels, before being taken to the hospital. Kapp left the letter unsigned; his name was added incorrectly spelled as “Copp,” and this name marks his Grave 604, Section B, of the Soldiers’ Home National Cemetery, Washington, D.C. This final letter, although lacking a specific date, contains days and dates which make it possible to follow Kapp—and his regiment—as they moved from Harrison’s Landing toward Manassas to participate in the Battle of Bull Run.

## **Subjects**

German Americans – United States History – Civil War, 1861-1865.  
Pennsylvania – United States History – Civil War, 1861-1865.  
Pennsylvania Dutch – United States History – Civil War, 1861-1865.  
United States – Army – Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment, 10th (1861-1865) – Company E.  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Campaigns – Bull Run, 1st Battle of, Va., 1861.  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Campaigns – Bull Run, 2nd Battle of, Va., 1862.  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Campaigns – Fredericksburg, Battle of, Fredericksburg, Va., 1862.  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Personal narratives.

Kapp, Samuel, d. 1862.

## **Administrative Information**

### **Restrictions**

The collection is open for research.

### **Acquisition information**

Gift of Portland Historical Society (Ore.), 1978.

Accession number 1978:55

### **Preferred citation**

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Samuel S. Kapp Family Papers (Collection 3066), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

## Box and folder listing

Box or volume title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Letters from Samuel S. Kapp to parents and family	1861	15 items	1	1
Letters from Samuel S. Kapp to parents and family	1862	25 items	1	2
Letters from Samuel S. Kapp to parents	n.d.	11 items	1	3
Letters from various correspondents to Martin Kapp	1861-1863	8 items	1	4
Memorabilia	1861-1862	8 items	1	5
Transcription of letters	n.d.	19 pages	1	6