

1860 - 1864



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*Collection numbers and links updated  
December 2012.*

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related to the Civil War in HSP's collection,  
visit our online catalog at [Discover.hsp.org](https://discover.hsp.org) [1].*

Most women were affected by the war in some way. Some leapt into the war effort working for various organizations, including the Ladies Hospital Aid Society, the Union Volunteer Refreshment Saloon, and the United States Christian Commission. Others performed activities on a more personal level, such as sewing individual items to be shipped to soldiers they knew. Such women's efforts certainly attest to the idea that women fought the war in their own ways on the home front and in doing so played a crucial role in helping the war effort.

While the vast majority of the papers reviewed here were written by ardent union women committed to the war effort, a few southern women are represented as well as some northern women who were not particularly interested in the war. Women from the states of Virginia and Georgia (see the letters of Augusta Chaucey Twiggs, Margaretta H. Jones Taylor, and Mary Clendenin Payne) provide a stark reminder of the Confederate perspectives on the war. Some Philadelphians, who did not believe the war was fought for the right reasons, demonstrated in their writings that all northern women were not in support of the war.

Those women who did help with the Union cause appear to fit into a general pattern, with few exceptions. For the most part, older women were more likely to participate through local organizations such as their churches or nearby hospitals by donating needed items or volunteering their personal time. Younger women interested in helping the Union cause seemed more willing to do something a distance from their homes, such as traveling to Washington or the battlefields with such organizations as the United States Christian and United States Sanitary Commissions. These younger women, often under the age of 30 and unmarried, were capable of being more active because they were mobile, often childless, and unencumbered with family or social constraints imposed upon many married women.

It became clear there was typically a distinction between women who had a loved one fighting or working for the government in Washington and those who did not. The women who wrote of a husband, brother, or son participating in some way were more likely to feel the need to contribute themselves, even if that meant simply sewing garments and sending them to soldiers they knew. Those who did not mention the war service of a family member, however, had less of a tendency to do something for the war effort, and if they wrote of the war at all it often consisted of war news culled from local newspapers and gossip about their local areas.

These conclusions are based on the assumption that if a woman knew a man involved in the war she would mention him in her letters or diaries. There are undoubtedly some exceptions to this rule: a woman may have deemed her letters or her journal an inappropriate place for that type of personal information or may have been so deeply concerned for her loved one that she could not write about it. With that caveat, the majority of women probably did make at least a passing reference to the military service of their friends or relations if that was part of their experience

of the war.

Beyond the war effort, these letters and diaries provide an excellent study of the daily lives of women during the 1860s. The beliefs and routines each engaged in on a daily basis are often mentioned in great detail and include Christianity, spirituality, visits with friends, weather, children, and gardening.

This list was accumulated using both the *Guide to the Manuscript Collections of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1991) and the card catalog at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Where possible, background information is provided with each summary. All quotes are annotated with dates, page numbers, and other necessary information. Unfortunately, biographical information about these women was at times difficult to find, so this is supplemented with information about husbands and male correspondents.

When writing this guide, the focus was on women's writings pertaining to the war effort in some way, either through their personal efforts or their notes on local news and gossip. Many women whose lives did not seem to change as a result of the war or those who wrote little or nothing about the topic were not included. There are a few letters of men written to women incorporated, but not a great number, as they focus on their personal experiences in the war. For information regarding soldiers' experiences in the war, including letters home, and further resources pertaining to the Civil War housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, see the *Guide to Civil War Manuscripts and Newspaper Collections* ([available here](#) <sup>[2]</sup>) by Daniel Rolph, Ph.D.

All the manuscripts listed in this guide are available for public use. The name of the women authors or the title of the organization heads each description. In cases where the collection name is different, the italicized headings are the manuscript collection titles where these documents can be found.

# Diaries

## **Ashhurst, Mary Hazlehurst. Diaries (1863-1864) *Ashhurst Family Papers* Collection No. 1992**

Mary Ashhurst, wife of Lewis Ashhurst, a Philadelphia merchant and bank director, wrote daily journals throughout her life (1809-1890), including two during the war years. The first of these began in 1863, when Ashhurst was 54, and she described her daily routine in some detail. Religion and prayer were important to her, as she often referred to them in her entries. She spent a great deal of time sewing for soldiers she knew and mailing items to them when she could, which is a typical example of an older woman's approach to helping the war effort.

Ashhurst kept abreast of the current events surrounding the Civil War, which by 1863 was raging throughout the South. She recorded Grant's success in the southwest and the Battle of Vicksburg. In addition, Ashhurst noted local rumors of a Confederate invasion in the North and feared for the city of Philadelphia, where she resided during these years. Most of the information she repeated in her diary was derived from newspapers she had read.

Her remarks on the Battle of Gettysburg were detailed and in depth. She wrote of the fighting raging there and felt it was too close to her home for comfort. She prayed General Meade would "keep the Rebels from Philadelphia." By July 4, she had read in the local papers that "Meade [had] repulsed Lee," but there were "no particulars yet" as to the casualties and other statistics except that Meade had reportedly captured 7,000 prisoners.

In the second volume of her diary, beginning on November 9, 1864, Ashhurst wrote of the reelection of President Lincoln and how joyous she was with this outcome. He, she said, would bring "peace and prosperity" to the

country and for that she was “truly thankful.” Later, she noted his assassination and the attempted murder of Secretary of State William Seward. She wrote that these “two men stood between the South’s extreme measures.” Ashhurst noted the city was in a state of complete mourning and all the flags were “draped in black” while the nation tried to deal with this “great distress.”

Ashhurst’s diaries are rather hard to follow because she used initials rather than first names to identify people when she wrote about them. There were no months written on the entries, making it difficult to know when events were occurring. These diaries document an older woman with friends involved in the fighting who was interested in the war effort and concerned for her own safety as well as that of the soldiers.

### **Askew, Mary Brown. Diary Call No. Am .0098**

Mary Brown Askew lived in Burlington, New Jersey, during the war years (vols. 2 and 3 of the collection). She was an active Presbyterian and wrote short entries regarding religion, daily life, and friends. Askew wrote of the regiments that left Burlington at the outbreak of war. Henry Mitchell, a family friend, “has enlisted in the 7th N.J. Regiment. He came to bid his mother goodbye. How sad, everything is sad, nothing is pleasant – our once glorious happy country – God grant it may soon cease,” Askew wrote on April 22, 1861.

There was little war news written in her diary after the soldiers departed Burlington with the exception of brief lines reporting what she had read in newspapers. There was no mention of any letters received from soldiers or any record of her participating in relief organizations. Many of the friends and correspondents she noted in her diary were often abbreviated to initials and were difficult to decipher, making certain facts about her life difficult to apprehend.

She was, however, very involved with her

church and attended services many times each week. At the end of each volume she created a timeline highlighting important events in her life, including weddings, deaths, and trips.

On April 15, 1865, she wrote of the death of Lincoln as “a national sorrow, the joy of our recent victory and near prospect of peace has changed to great sorrow. A great and good man has fallen.”

Askew represents a woman with no obvious ties to the war through family members and as a result did not appear to be as interested in lending her hand or writing about the news circulating the city.

## **Briggs, Margaret Warren. Memoirs Society Collection Collection 22**

Margaret Briggs, born in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, in 1857, wrote a memoir when she was 84 years of age. Her earliest memories of the Civil War in central Pennsylvania, where her family resided and her father was a Methodist preacher, provide an 84-year-old's view of the war and events she witnessed as a young child. Her parents had met and been married in Gettysburg, where they were both born and raised. Briggs was one of the youngest in the family of nine children.

She remembered the Battle of Gettysburg, as it was less than 50 miles from her house and because she had family living in town. "We heard the Rebel troops [were going to] go through our town. I can see the people, mine among them, burying their silver and what valuables they had in the garden." That same night, just a few days before the battle, she heard the Rebel Cavalry come through the town. After the battle, Briggs went to Gettysburg with her parents and noted, "I still remember that ride, my first on a railway train, I remember going over the battlefield, and seeing breast works and shallow trenches where the soldiers were hastily buried - some

bodies scarcely covered."

Briggs recalled the death of Lincoln. "We were living in Shrevesburg when President Lincoln was killed, and my father, who was an ardent admirer of Lincoln, bundled all of us children in the carriage and we drove to the railroad, to see the funeral train go by on its way to Springfield."

All of the Civil War news is located on page two of this typescript memoir and provides some insight of an older woman's recollections of the effects of war on a family with young children.

**Fisher, Elizabeth Ingersoll. Diaries  
*Fisher, Sydney George Collection*  
Collection No. 1850B Box 2**

Two of the diaries in this collection are from the Civil War years (April, 1861 to November, 1861, and November, 1861 to March, 1863). They document the life of Elizabeth Ingersoll Fisher (1815-1872), daughter of Charles Ingersoll and wife of Sidney George Fisher, a Philadelphia author and diarist, and note both war news and daily events.

Fisher was very interested in the war news reported in the newspapers. Although she mentioned some of her daily chores such as planting vegetables and flowers in her diary entries, she focused more on the national events surrounding the war. On April 20, 1861, in the first month of the war, she wrote, "There are neither mail nor telegrams from the South. People seem to be in better hopes that the Capital can be defended. So many troops have gone and are still going." On July 5, Fisher noted the parade she saw in Philadelphia of the "Home Guard." "I would have liked to [have] seen the parade in Washington where there were two miles of troops on Pennsylvania Avenue."

She wrote much of the local gossip about the war as well. Whenever she went to gatherings with friends they discussed the war to a great extent. "George, Sydney, and I dined at

Brookwood - great deal of war talk and not inspiring." Fisher wrote July 20, 1861, that the same friends talked of "troops in western Virginia, successful at Bull's Run and thus on their way to Manassas Junction."

On August 31, 1861, she wrote of the news that "Fremont has declared martial law in Missouri and that the slaves of all persons fighting or plotting against the U.S. government are free... he has gone a step further – and it is alarming." Fisher, an older woman, did not appear to support the emancipation of slaves and she wrote more of a war fought to preserve the Union.

She did not write of anyone from her family fighting and never mentioned personally helping the war effort, thus fitting the pattern that older women did not lend a hand if they did not have family involved. Nonetheless, the war haunted her and was the topic of the majority of her writings. On September 14, 1861, Fisher wrote that she "had bad dreams last night about the war. [I] was in battles and when I awoke could not help thinking of dreadful scenes that might be going on there." This was one of several instances when Fisher appeared to be concerned for her own personal safety.

## **Grier, Helen S. Diary** **Call No. Am .6090**

Helen Grier began her small, sporadic diary on November 21, 1862, in Philadelphia. A young, unmarried woman, she worked with the U.S. Christian Commission and by February 12, 1863, the second entry, she was in Washington praying with and providing food for soldiers. From there she traveled to Virginia with the Army of the Potomac, where she provided similar services.

Grier wrote, often in poor handwriting, of generals, including Butterfield and Howard, who met with the Commission to discuss what assistance they would provide for their men. She visited many camps and hospitals during her time in Virginia and Washington. She fed

the sick cornstarch, eggnog, blackberry brandy, soda biscuits, and custard. Grier visited many camps including the 35th New York, 12th New Jersey, and the 140th Pennsylvania regiments, and always brought medicines, food, and prayer with her.

At French's Division Hospital, Grier wrote on April 3, 1863, that there were only "badly regulated five or six tents. Two dead men were carried out behind the tents and one typhoid patient breathed his last as we entered. I saw another sick man with typhoid fever and I fed him custard and blackberry brandy. We gave all soda biscuit and custard." She wrote much of men recovering in this and other hospitals she encountered and the sadness she felt for them. On June 1, 1863, at Potomac Creek Hospital, she met a man from the 6th Maine Regiment while distributing gallons of pudding. "His bright face was touched to tears when I told him of my home." The last entry dated June 5, 1863, was written in Washington.

Grier appeared to have no family fighting, as she never mentioned any names or letters received from soldiers to whom she was related. Nevertheless, she volunteered with the Christian Commission, committing her time and risking personal infection. Perhaps because she was young and unmarried, with few personal responsibilities, Grier was able to travel where she was most needed.

### **Marchand, Lizzie. Diary Call No. Am .10175**

Lizzie Marchand's journal (March 1864 - June 1864), currently in poor condition with a broken spine and faded ink, documents her life at Mrs. Cary's Boarding School, in Philadelphia, where she attended classes in drawing, dancing, singing, sewing, and philosophy. Marchand was often homesick, even though her sister, Kate, was also attending the boarding school, and she longed for letters from her family in Baltimore.

Many of the activities in which the girls

participated were held at the Academy of Music, the Academy of Fine Arts, and Calvary Church (the Baptist church she attended while in the city). On March 10, 1864, "some of us went to the Academy of Music to hear speeches in reference to the Sanitary Commission and their approaching fair" to be held in June. This was one of many speeches held to advertise and raise money for the Sanitary Fair.

She noted some news of the war in the city. On April 14, 1864, Marchand saw a "regiment of colored troops passing the house. They were a fine looking set of men, if such a name can be applied to such a collection of individuals." The news in the papers, she felt, was often exaggerated and she never believed many of the war rumors pervading the city, mentioning them only when there was some news that struck her as interesting, even if she did not believe it.

Marchand participated in the United States Sanitary Commission's Great Fair held in June 1864 (see also the *Organizations* section of this guide for more information about the Fair). On May 23, she went with several of the other schoolgirls to a concert given for the benefit of the Sanitary Fair. On June 9, Marchand attended the fair held at Logan Square and wrote about it the following day. "I am sure that the false alarms about the fair being a failure are all unfounded for we went and it was really beautiful. I bought two or three little things and after walking around and seeing everything we returned at 10 o'clock very tired."

This was Marchand's last entry in the diary. Her daughter, Susie Logan, began writing in it again in 1886.

### **McManus, Susan R. Trautwine. Diary Call No. Am .1002**

There are 14 separate journals in the McManus collection. Four of these are considered here: one from 1859 to 1860; another dated 1862; another 1864 to 1865; and the last an undated volume, probably from

1863 and 1864. McManus resided in Philadelphia and was a Moravian Evangelical by faith. Most of her writing reflected her ardent beliefs and how they affected her daily life.

The first diary describes her daily routines and life in great detail. McManus wrote of the chores and duties she performed, including morning cleaning, market trips, and having tea with different women on a daily basis. She also listed the books she read in that year and all the letters she had received and sent.

The next diary was written in 1862 and included more news on a national scale than the previous diary, presumably due to the war's outbreak. Still, she continued to write of her daily life, which remained unchanged. She noted war news and rumors from the papers, mentioning places such as Fort Donelson, where women from her church sent collected articles of clothing for the wounded. Battles were recorded including those along the James River and Antietam, where McManus wrote of the reported great losses of both the armies. On December 15, McManus noted that she had read in the paper of a possible slave insurrection in Charleston, South Carolina, and gave a description of the news. At the end of the diary there is also an itemized cash account for all the items she purchased in that year and the prices of each. Such items include a corset, fabrics, and envelopes.

The third diary is dated 1864 to 1865. More daily activities were mentioned, such as teaching Sunday school through the church. On May 7, she wrote of a great battle (the Wilderness) and wrote there were rumors of its incredible scale. She prayed that those she knew were not present for that fight and she expressed her fear for their lives. McManus continued to do her part for the war effort by sewing for soldiers and working through the Ladies Christian Commission, an organization created to help Federal soldiers.

She noted how the city reacted to Union victories in the war. She called this a time of

“great excitement and joy.” In 1865, at the end of this volume, McManus wrote of the loss of the President shortly after the war. She said the war was “nationally fought with the blessings of liberty to millions,” but it was “shadowed by the sudden loss of our faithful Lincoln.”

There is an undated diary in the collection (from the various dates within, it is probably from 1863-64). Included were the names of men McManus knew who died in battle. Some of them have notes as to which regiment they were from, how she knew them, their age (some younger than 17), and where they died. Several of them she met when they attended her Bible study classes while they were in Philadelphia. The list contains approximately 40 names, roughly half of which have notes detailing how she knew them and information regarding their deaths.

The diaries reflect little as to the personal opinions of McManus about the war. Her writing on the war news seemed to be very much based on newspapers and not personal reflection. The book on soldiers' deaths is significant as it illustrates many of the different home states of soldiers who passed through Philadelphia, which included such faraway states as Illinois and Michigan.

**Merklee, Amanda. Diaries and Record Book for the Ladies Spring Garden Aid Association  
Call No. Am .13751**

This collection consists of the volumes of Amanda Merkle's diary, spanning 1860 to 1866. In the first volume (1860-1863), Merkle lived in the city of Philadelphia and was very active in the 10th Street Baptist Church. She recorded much of daily life and concerns, including the weather, Sunday school, and spirituality.

Merklee did not write for approximately 18 months, during which time the war had broken out. Because of this, when she started writing again she detailed what had happened in the

intervening months. She noted Lincoln's election and the South's reactions, and commented on how slavery had "long been agitating our land." Merklee mentioned how the war threw "brother against brother" and explained what the Confederacy hoped to gain. Certain battles were recorded, including Manassas Junction (July 21, 1861). She went on to note that the Federal side was that of "justice and right." Her rendition of the outbreak of the Civil War seems to express her opinion of certain topics of the time, not just reiterate the opinions voiced in the local papers.

In this journal she wrote of the role of women in the war effort and what they did at home. "Thousands of women found employment" and "all did what they could." Merklee noted that some became nurses and helped the wounded and sick while others sewed and mailed items to soldiers.

For the remainder of this diary, Merklee devoted one page to war news for each page of personal happenings. She wrote about news from the papers including various battles, the drafts, and the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.

Volume 3 is dated from 1863 to 1866. There are newspaper clippings of war news secured to the front several pages of the diary, including one regarding McClellan's farewell. She noted much news about the Confederate surrender in 1865 as well as the thousands of soldiers in the hospitals during that same year. The assassination of Lincoln in Ford's Theatre at the hands of John Wilkes Booth was recorded as well.

The notes of the Ladies Spring Garden Aid Association, of which Merklee was president during the war years, are located in Volume 2. This Association was organized February 19, 1862, in order to assist the Union side. There are lists of the members enclosed as well as reports of women who traveled to Federal hospitals and the conditions they found there. Included are the minutes of the meetings and what appears to be a speech, presumably given by Merklee, in which she said the

women needed to help “with the burdens of life” because as “the men fight, it is our responsibility to provide their comforts.”

**Stokes, Sallie. Diary 1859-1864  
Call No. Am .1573**

Sallie Stokes was from Germantown and she was in her twenties during the time of the war. She was unmarried and she often wrote of her brother, only referred to as "Wyn." He enlisted and left for war on May 7, 1861. She "waved her handkerchief" as he marched down the street.

She copied letters sent to her by Wyn into her small diary and also discussed church services and books she read throughout the years. By the time Wyn was mustered out he had become quartermaster sergeant of his regiment. Neither Sallie nor Wyn mentioned which regiment he was with.

One of the events he witnessed through his service, recounted by Stokes in her diary, was when "all the gunboats drew up in line of battle as it was thought the Rebel gunboat, the little Merrimac, was coming down the river."

Although she was a young woman with a loved one fighting, there is little evidence that Stokes did anything to help or volunteer for the war effort.

**Wharton, Katherine Johnson Brinley.  
Diaries  
Collection No. 1861**

These two volumes (vols. 3 & 4), span the years of the war and describe Wharton's daily routine, which incorporated chores, visitors, and her family, both in Philadelphia and Newport, Rhode Island. She married her husband, Henry Wharton, September 30, 1858. She included both original and well-known poems, as well as artwork and drawings in her journals.

Wharton noted some war news including her entry for September 8, 1862, when she arrived

in Philadelphia by train to see twenty tents pitched in Independence Square where regiments were recruiting local boys and men. There was little written pertaining to her husband during the war years and she did not note whether he was dead, enlisted, or at home. She had a child named Thomas before the war and he was mentioned in several entries.

Wharton helped the war effort by rolling bandages for the local hospitals. She began working for the Soldiers' Relief Association in 1863, through which she "worked as desperately as I could to get some of this weight off my heart." The war upset her and she wrote of feeling a need to lend a hand in any way she could.

## Letters

### **Acton, Edward A. Letters to his wife, Mary Woodnut Acton *Edward A. Acton papers* Collection No. 1910**

Edward Acton was an officer with the 4th New Jersey Volunteers who wrote to his wife, Mary Woodnut Acton, in Salem, New Jersey, during the war. They mention several of the letters she sent to him while he was fighting. She apparently sent him many goods at his request, including food and shirts, while other female friends of the family also sent him items such as catsup and grapes.

There are no letters from Mary Acton to her husband in the collection. He noted the long time it took her letters to get to him and commented on some of the things she wrote in them, including home and how people in Salem were dealing with the war. Several times he asked her in his letters to tell him more about the goings on at home and the daily occurrences she seemed to leave out in her letters. There were a few letters in which he noted that the information that she gave him about the army was unknown to him, including the reported location of the

Confederates from the newspapers. Subsequent letters at the end of the collection were addressed to Mary describing her husband's death at the Second Battle of Bull Run fought August 29-30, 1862.

**Kelley, Caroline Bonsall. Letters**  
***William Darrah Kelley Papers***  
**Collection No. 1921**

The correspondence in this collection (1837-1903) is between William D. Kelley, a leader in the abolition movement, and his wife Caroline Bonsall Kelley. William Kelley, born in 1814 in Philadelphia, was a Republican congressman from the fourth district of the city. He was elected in 1861 and served for 29 years until his death in 1890. His aunt was Sarah Pugh, president of the Philadelphia Female Abolition Society (see under Organizations). The Kelleys had three children.

The many letters from Caroline (Box 1, Folder 18) began in 1862 and continue through 1888. She remained at their home in Philadelphia while her husband was away in Washington. Letters during the war years noted much of her daily life, such as the well being of the children, visits with friends, and daily chores. She wrote of the many funerals she attended while he was gone, including one for the fourteen-year-old son of friends Thomas and Lizzie Cavender, who had gone swimming and died two weeks later of an infection. Caroline also traveled to the New Jersey beaches and wrote of her time at places such as Brigantine.

On February 29, 1862, she wrote that on her way to Willow Glen she encountered a lieutenant and a newly enlisted private at the train station heading towards Hestonville, PA, where their regiment was stationed. "I enquired whether any of the men needed mittens, saying I had half a dozen pairs. 'Many hundred would be acceptable, Madam' was their reply. I will do all I can but I fear it will seem so little among so many." She often sewed and tried to help with the war effort in any way she could. Mrs. Kelley wrote little of war news from the papers or rumors abounding in the city, but

rather focused on her personal efforts to help as well as her daily life experiences.

**Cox, Emily. Letters 1861-1866**  
***West Family Papers***  
**Collection No. 1973**

This collection consists of letters between Emily Cox and her fiancé, Alexander Hensley. Alexander joined the 1st Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry. When he first left for war, Emily was unmarried and living with her family at 1515 Walnut Street. In 1863, on leave from the army, Alexander Hensley and Emily Cox married and she moved to 2017 Pine Street. Hensley was engaged in several major battles of the war, including Gettysburg.

There were several letters from Alexander to Emily but only two letters by Emily to Alexander in the collection. Her letters were written soon after the marriage and are dated June 19 and June 23, 1863. She worried about him returning to battle and feared for his life. "I took two or three good cries since you left yesterday. What is fun to you is death to me."

In the second of these two letters, she wrote that she was going to stay in Haverford with her widowed mother while Alexander was gone. The women would be close to friends and neither would be alone, and the rent for the apartment was "only eight dollars a month." Writing about the move, Emily observed, "I would rather stay in town, except on Mother's account, but I believe I shall be able there to get all the news as soon as in town."

**Dade, Laura Henderson and Helen Henderson. Letters**  
***Mrs. Irvin H. McKesson Collection***  
**Collection No. 1542**

Box 7 of this large collection pertains to women and the Civil War. The majority of the letters in this box were written between two sisters, Laura and Helen Henderson. There are also other notes included that relate to

their family.

The first item in this collection is a telegraph dated October 15, 1862, allowing Mrs. Samuel Dade (Laura Henderson) to accompany her husband, a surgeon in the Federal Army, to Hilton Head, S.C. She wrote much of her experiences in the southern hospital to her sister Helen. Much of her daily routine was discussed, as was the house she lived in. Dade noted how the city was destroyed by soldiers before they got there and how she pitied the people that were forced out of their houses to accommodate Federal surgeons and other war personnel.

Dade wrote in detail of the goings on at the hospital and the war in general. She did not participate much at the hospital until it was very busy and they needed all the people they could find to help. When Rebels fired on a gunboat in the harbor at Charleston, for example, she had to assist in the amputation of a leg.

She seemed to be rather lonely and often wrote of missing her family. She tried to get a pass for her mother to come and visit her, but it was denied because, as the telegraph worded, any visitations could be a "threat to Union lines".

After the war Dade came back to Philadelphia and stayed there until her death in 1922.

## **Davis, Elizabeth M. to Lydia Brown.**

**Letters 1861-1865**

***Davis, Brown, and Yale families***

***correspondence*** <sup>[3]</sup>

**Collection No. 164**

William Morris Davis, by trade a sugar refiner, was an ardent abolitionist who served in Congress between 1861 and 1863. He and his wife, Elizabeth, lived in Philadelphia.

Throughout 1861 his wife remained in their house with their two children while Davis was in Washington. He often traveled back and forth between the two places to see his family. These letters are from Mrs. Davis to her close

friend Lydia Brown, who resided in New York. Lydia's husband was a sculptor also working in Washington during these years.

The correspondence consisted of her daily routines and current events. Mathew Brady, a famous photographer at the time, took pictures of her children, Helen and Harry, and she wrote of this experience. Some news of the war was included, mostly news Elizabeth received from her husband and then relayed to Lydia. "I don't know anything except newspapers and congressional news and I want more heart warming news" she wrote on March 31, 1862. Elizabeth expressed a desire for Brown to write her with happy news of her life in New York.

As the war dragged on, Elizabeth did not want to be alone. "The awful war, can any amount of national glory and prosperity end this. I think nothing but the emancipation of the slave can end this terrible and bloody war." In 1862 she decided to take the children and join her husband in Washington, though she knew the move would upset them. She wanted to help in some way in Washington: "I know there must be something for me to do in this time of suffering." There were no letters, however, describing her efforts to help in any way.

Also included are many notes from William Morris Davis expressing his opinions about the war and President Lincoln. Thus these letters reflect the abolitionist beliefs of both Lydia and William Davis.

**Fisher, Elizabeth Ingersoll. Letters  
*Sidney George Fisher Papers*  
Collection No. 1850A**

*See also Elizabeth Ingersoll Fisher under Diaries*

Elizabeth Ingersoll Fisher (1815-1872), lived in Philadelphia at Forest Hill and wrote several letters to her husband Sidney George Fisher (1809-1871), an author and diarist, while he was away in New York in 1864. He went to take "21 baths" from certain springs, perhaps to

better his health, as he was suffering from gout at the time.

Fisher wrote about her daily life in the city, which included having her photograph taken and trying to manage the household while her husband was gone. "You had better send a little something to keep the family going," she told him in September, though she never used days of the month in addressing her letters. She noted the rising prices of certain products and his need to send her money because times were getting tougher for her. On September 3, 1864, she wrote, "Do not bring me anything from New York, the times are too hard for that."

Fisher, was very interested in current events and politics and included in several letters newspaper clippings of the latest war and political news. One of the subjects in much of the correspondence was McClellan's race for the Presidency in 1864. When Mr. Thomas, a friend of the family, was visiting, he told her, "Peace was certain within a short time, no matter who was elected, and gave one reason that Grant's campaign in Virginia has been a failure."

**Fisher, Letitia Ellicott. Letters  
*Sydney Longstreth Wright Papers*  
Collection No. 2096**

This collection includes the letters Letitia Ellicott Fisher wrote to her family members, primarily to her nieces (Box 2, Folder 10) in 1864. Letitia Fisher was married to Thomas Rodman Fisher on November 27, 1829 and had six children. Harvey Fisher, her youngest son, fought in the Civil War with the 150th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, known as the "Bucktails." Many of her letters note his involvement in the war as well as national war news circulating in Philadelphia at the time.

Fisher worried about the welfare of her son and the country. On May 11, 1864, in a letter addressed to her nieces, she wrote of the Battle of Spotsylvania (fought May 8-19), and called it a "terrific battle which is to decide this

protracted contest.”

The Sanitary Commission's Great Fair, held in 1864, was mentioned in several letters. “The Great Sanitary Fair is the all absorbing topic with all the ladies both in town and country, with old and young. Fannie and Ellen Parrish were showing me some beautiful articles of their own manufacture, that I have no doubt will sell well. Mrs. Carpenter has allowed her house to be used for amateur performances. They are today having a stage erected in one of her parlors.”

Fisher, like many mothers with sons in the war, felt the need to help in such fundraisers as the Fair. “To think after all those dreadful battles the poor soldiers will need all the aid that they can bestow upon them.” She donated her time in these fundraisers in an effort to help those fighting, including her own son.

**Gilson, Helen L. Letters**  
***Society Miscellaneous Collection*** [4]  
**Collection No. 425**

Helen Gilson, an orphan from Boston born in 1835, became involved in the war effort through the Sanitary Commission. When the war broke out, she had applied to be a nurse, but was rejected and subsequently joined the Sanitary Commission. During her service in 1863 and 1864, she wrote several letters to Thomas Kimber, a friend living in Philadelphia at the time, noting her activities and requesting him to send certain items for use at the hospital where she was stationed.

Gilson first spent time in Washington before being moved elsewhere with the army. "I can always find enough to occupy my time in the immediate vicinity of Washington, tho' I would prefer my work in the field for there is the most suffering," Gilson wrote on March 24, 1863.

Soon after, she was stationed at the hospital of the 2nd Division, 3rd Corps on the Potomac Creek "until there is an engagement" and wrote Kimber of her duties. She made custard for the sickest and supplied the smaller

regimental hospitals with milk, punch, and eggnog. She sent money to Kimber and asked him to get these items for her in Philadelphia. On April 21, she wrote, "Today for the first time I conducted a funeral service. I could not see a fellow soldier laid away without some service." That same day the chaplain had been called away for some other duty and she led the needed prayers.

On April 20, Kimber received a letter from Horace Howard Furness, an associate member of the Sanitary Commission, thanking him for his efforts in helping Gilson by sending the items she requested. By this time, Gilson had already been to battlefields and had assisted wounded soldiers. "As a general rule, the battlefield is not the place for women. In the General Hospitals is their sphere of usefulness. But no one who has ever seen Miss Gilson in the Field Hospitals can for a moment doubt but that in her case is the great, almost solitary exception to the rule." After the Battle of Fredericksburg, she "had a cheery, peaceful word for each of the poor sufferers." Furness went on to note that a soldier in the hospital, wounded during that fight, said to him that "If God ever made an angel, she's one."

In May, Gilson wrote again describing her work with the wounded at Fredericksburg. "I was shelled at Fredericksburg yesterday while attending wounded. We have thousands of wounded and I am working night and day - cooking, feeding, dressing wounds, taking messages of dying, and praying with them," Gilson noted on May 5. On May 10, she wrote, "No one can ever appreciate the spirit of patriotism until he stands by the deathbed and hears the last testimony of many a patriot."

The letters continue through the remainder of the year and for part of the next. Later that summer she was at Gettysburg: "Never have I seen so much suffering mortality and destruction." She traveled with the Division hospital to Virginia, South Carolina, New York, and other places throughout her service.

Gilson was an exception to the assumption that only women who had close friends and

family members fighting in the war actually participated themselves to a great degree. An orphan, she had no family members fighting, yet she felt the need to help because of her religious beliefs and her concern for the soldiers. Because she was young and unattached, she was able to move without any ties holding her in one place.

## **Harris, E. H. Letters**

### ***Society Collection***

### **Collection 22**

In 1862, E.H. Harris, the secretary of the Ladies Aid Society of Philadelphia, left her home at 1106 Pine Street to volunteer at hospitals with the wounded soldiers of the war because "how many thousands have died for want of prompt and efficient help." She wrote letters to the organization and members subsequently copied her letters into this small pamphlet titled "Anecdotes of Our Wounded and Dying Soldiers in the Rebellion." The letters were addressed to Mrs. Joel Jones, of 625 Walnut Street, the president of the Aid Society.

Her letters noted many personal stories of wounded soldiers and the terrors of death she encountered daily. One boy, Harris wrote, no older than 18 years of age, had been wounded and she comforted him. "Let me be your mother and try to comfort you," she wrote of telling him. "He implored me to write to his mother a very long letter, sending a piece of his hair." She wrote further that she "could fill page after page with just such histories, and many more touching."

From May 31 to June 5, 1862, Harris was aboard the transport ship *Louisiana* just after the Battle of Seven Pines in Virginia. "There the whole day had been spent operating. Many will die, all had undergone mutilation in some part of their member!" When she left the boat she was "obliged to wash my skirts as they actually smelt offensively from being drabbled in the mingled blood of Federal and Confederate soldiers, which covered many parts of the floor. This is war, war in all its

fearful horrors!"

Harris' tasks while serving as a nurse included washing and feeding the sick, assisting in operations and amputations, and visiting with the wounded. She wrote that the men had to deal with terrible conditions such as starvation, lack of sanitation, and unclean water. "It is no wonder many die, the wonder is that any live under these adverse influences."

On June 19, 1862, Harris wrote at Dudley Farm, Virginia, of her experiences attempting to get candles for the hospital because they had run out that evening. "On my way for them a volley of musketry disclosed my proximity to the battleground, and [I] could hear the yells and shrieks which follow a bayonet charge. After great labor and fatigue, [I] succeeded in procuring a few candles, not half that we required."

**Kirk, Eliza Marcella. Letters  
*Kirk Family Papers*  
Collection No. 2005**

Box 2 of this collection contains letters written by Eliza Kirk of Sterling, Illinois. Her husband, Edward Kirk, was in command of the 34th Illinois Volunteer Infantry and she traveled with him throughout his service. Her two children were left with family members during the years of his enlistment. Kirk's letters were from various places throughout the South and were written to her mother.

There was one other woman (unnamed) who traveled with the 34th Illinois, and became a friend of Kirk's. Kirk was pleased that the men "always treat us with the greatest kindness and consideration." One letter noted that the two women "often laugh and wonder what the folks at home would say if they could see us" with their hands dirty and living as they were. She was pleased to be away and the war seemed an adventure to her.

All this gaiety in the letters stopped, though, when her husband was wounded on December 31, 1862. By this time, he had been

promoted to brigadier general. The letter to her mother, written in Louisville, described the injuries her husband had received in the arm and leg. Both limbs were infected and had developed abscesses. He seemed to be improving and letters were hopeful for his complete recovery. In a letter dated July 18, 1863, Eliza wrote that his condition was worsening and feared for his life. He died a few days later.

After wartime, Eliza moved to Philadelphia with her children where she began teaching and became active in the Episcopal Church. She remained in the city until her own death in 1897.

## **McCall, Elizabeth McCurtie and Archibald. Letters**

***McCall Papers*** <sup>[5]</sup>

### **Collection No. 1786**

This collection consists of correspondence between Archibald McCall and his wife Elizabeth McCurtie McCall. George was born in 1802 in Philadelphia and died in 1868 in West Chester. He was a professional soldier, involved in both the Mexican and Seminole Wars before his service in the Civil War. In May 1861, he was the major general of the Pennsylvania Volunteers and later that same month was appointed to brigadier general of Volunteers and commanded the Pennsylvania Reserves (3<sup>rd</sup> Division, 5<sup>th</sup> Corps). During the war years his wife lived in Belair, PA, with their three children, Archy, Emmy, and Bessie.

George McCall's letters to his wife (Box 3) began May 16, 1861 from Harrisburg, where he was located for much of that year. In the first letters he wrote her that he was to be appointed Major General. Many of his experiences in the war were relayed to his wife through these letters. On August 3, 1861, he wrote, "the day before yesterday I rode out with McClellan on the left bank of the Potomac to examine the countryside." Locations he wrote from throughout the war included such places as Washington, Alexandria, and Fredericksburg. McCall was captured June 30,

1862 at the Seven Day's Battle in Glendale, VA. He wrote his wife from Richmond where he was held a prisoner of war. "Yesterday my division was attacked and the battle raged with violence until after dark. You will, no doubt, be quite as much surprised as I was myself to learn I am here a prisoner of war." He was freed two months later through a prisoner exchange. In each letter he wrote how he enjoyed his wife's letters. On March 28, 1862 he wrote, "It makes one feel as if you were with me and telling me all your thoughts and wishes. It makes me for the brief period, happy."

The letters from Elizabeth McCall to her husband (Box 5) address the daily occurrences of her country life in Belair. She continued to run their family farm in his absence. On July 10, 1861 she wrote him that "all the hay was cut yesterday and taken in today" with the assistance of several paid workers. She traveled to Philadelphia, Chestnut Hill, and West Chester for items such as strawberry plants, barrels of oil, and harnesses for horses. Some of the daily chores she noted included making butter, cleaning both the house and cottage (which was later rented out on February 8, 1861 for \$11.50), selling cattle for \$8.50 each, and sewing.

Some war news from the papers was mentioned but she wrote in February 1862 that "I know it is not much to be relied upon" because of exaggerations. On July 2, 1862, just a few days after her husband's capture, she noted, "We procured a copy of the Bulletin which gave more definitely than anything we have yet seen the account of this dreadful battle in which you have been engaged. It made us realize the terrors of war." There are no letters written by Elizabeth in the collection during the time her husband was a prisoner of war. The letters began again in October and continued with much of the same daily news about chores and the children.

One of Elizabeth's hobbies was collecting photographs of the Federal generals. She

wrote asking her husband to obtain “the photographs of General Reynolds and Ord? I have all the dignitaries except those two.” General Reynolds, killed at the Battle of Gettysburg, was a Federal general and Corps commander. General Ord, also a Federal general, was associated with the 117th New York Volunteer Infantry and participated primarily in the Western theatre of the war.

These letters are very well organized. Each letter was numbered and the following letters referred to preceding letters by number: “Today I received your letter 79 in the mail,” etc. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has the complete run of over one hundred letters.

### **Mifflin, Elizabeth. Letters Call No. Am .10395**

This collection consists of a scrapbook of many letters received by Mifflin, most dated 1864, from bishops and clergymen. The apparent goal of this endeavor was to gather the autographs of these prominent religious persons in one book, which would then be donated to the U.S. Sanitary Commission to raise money for Federal soldiers at their 1864 Central Fair held in Philadelphia. One of the letters included in the volume describes this task she had undertaken and thanked her for her “efforts to help the suffering soldiers.”

The book does not have much writing in it and some pages contain only the signatures of various bishops. There are some letters thanking Mifflin for her efforts and others from bishops refusing her invitation of donating their signed names for her scrapbook. Ironically, many of these bishops signed their letters of refusal and helped Mifflin inadvertently as she also included these in the scrapbook. Some bishops wrote that they did not agree with her efforts and could not lend a hand while others wrote that due to their position in the church they could not voice an opinion in the war effort. Possibly the latter did support her efforts and knowingly signed the letters that ostensibly refused to support her cause.

## **Payne, Mary Clendenin. Letters Call No. Am .12358**

This collection consists of correspondence between Sarah Miller Payne and her cousin, Mary Payne, who lived in Philadelphia and later in Cecil County, Maryland. Sarah Miller Payne had been living in Virginia during the time of the Civil War and did not know her cousin very well, as they had only met a few times before the war began. The first of this series of letters was written on September 30, 1865.

Only the first letter discussed to the Civil War. Sarah Miller Payne noted in this lengthy letter that northern cities such as Philadelphia must not have felt many repercussions from the war and she thought northerners could not imagine the conditions of people in the South, where the bulk of the fighting had taken place.

"I often wondered," she said, if "Cousin Mary felt any sympathy for us away down South, or if she, like many others, thought we were terrible sinners." Sarah noted how she would love to meet Mary again for a visit. Unfortunately, though, Sarah's "dear old state presents anything but a pleasing appearance at this time."

In the South, she wrote, the society had changed drastically because of the war. They were "deprived of property" and left without money because of the heavy taxes of financing the war. They had lost their servants and were now surrounded by "indolent sets of persons" that were freed and thought they could "live without work."

Of Sarah's four boys who went to fight for secession, two did not come home: Sam (killed at Seven Pines) and John (killed at Gettysburg). Their regiments were not mentioned. Overall, a total of five of her twelve children had passed away when this letter was written.

The remainder of the collection is letters written to Mary describing how Sarah and her

family began to reestablish themselves after the war.

## **Porter, Ruth Cook. Letters Collection No. 2073**

Ruth Cook Porter, of Hackettstown, New Jersey, wrote many letters during the years 1858 to 1866 to her husband of 1863, James Madison Porter, a lawyer from Easton, Pennsylvania. The letters, many only dated with the year, describe daily life in Hackettstown and include such highlights as having "a likeness" taken and embarking on railroad trips. Her health and the health of her husband were major preoccupations in her letters as both were often ill.

There were some letters reflecting war news, yet her preoccupation with health was a constant concern. "You will think me a Patriot," she wrote, "when I tell you I attended one of those delightful sewing societies last evening but I did not injure my eyesight sewing. I did not care to go, but had such an urgent invitation. I was glad to get home again afterward." Many of her letters were unenthusiastic about the war effort and she did not appear to have a desire to help.

In another letter, Porter wrote that she went to a war meeting at the local church where "many men came marching in with a number of young persons from the Heath House. After the exercise had commenced, they carried the stars and stripes and sang 'John Brown' all together." She noted that the only reason for such a gathering was to build excitement in the town for enlistment purposes. "Perhaps they may succeed after holding another such meeting." Quite a number of fellows she knew had enlisted, much to her disappointment. She saw a "young boy of about sixteen enlist. He is too young to know what he is doing."

Porter was unsupportive and unenthusiastic about the war effort. She, though a young woman, did not feel a need to volunteer her time to sew items for soldiers or work with any organizations. There is no mention of any

relative of hers fighting in the war, furthering the assumption that women who knew of loved ones fighting had a much greater likelihood of doing something themselves while women such as Porter had less cause.

**Rodgers, Kate. Letters**  
***Furness-Bullitt Family Papers*** <sup>[6]</sup>  
**Collection No. 1903**

This collection consists of letters written by Kate Rodgers Furness of 222 Washington Square, Philadelphia, to her cousin Caroline "Carrie" Fairman Warren of Brooklyn, NY. Also included are letters written by Horace Howard Furness, Kate Rodgers' husband, an agent with the U.S. Sanitary Commission. Kate signed her letters with her maiden name Rodgers.

The letters from Rodgers to Fairman reported on daily life, including weather, friends' visits, and family affairs in Philadelphia during the war years. Rodgers had a baby named Walter in 1861, and much of the news throughout that year surrounded this event. Carrie Fairman was married in 1861, another event frequently discussed. Some of the accounts Rodgers wrote regarded marriages of friends in the city, gatherings with friends such as "musical Wednesdays with fried oysters and ale," and strolls through town where it was "hard to realize that there were such dens of sin and misery within a five minutes walk of us."

In 1862, Fairman was pregnant with her first child and much of Rodgers' letters relayed advice. "It is perfectly refreshing to hear anyone speak about it, in your true womanly way, instead of the miserable talk girls usually make about not being able to go into company and spoiling their figures," wrote Rodgers in September, 1862. Fairman had a son the next year.

In October, Rodgers wrote with the news that her husband was leaving with the Sanitary Commission. He was to travel to Washington for a few weeks and then return home. This did not happen, though, as he was greatly

needed and shipped out right away. In a letter dated October 5, 1862, Rodgers wrote that when he went to Washington he “was immediately dispatched to Frederick in a large army wagon” where he tended the wounded from Antietam (fought September 17, 1862) and other battles. After this, for much of 1862 and 1863, Furness was in South Carolina with the Commission.

She described the purpose of the Sanitary Commission as an organization that “supplies the wants of the wounded” and how she “felt better now that Horace is actually gone than I did just before, as he had been uneasy and anxious to do something.” Rodgers lived at her father’s house while her husband was away. “It is dreadfully hard, but I grin and bear it.”

The letters from Furness to his wife, many written from the fields of battle or hospitals behind the lines, addressed the tasks of the Sanitary Commission and his responsibilities. At Sharpsburg, also known as Antietam, he wrote her, “It was ghastly and ghostly, although all the dead have been buried, every tree and branch proclaims a deadly struggle.”

In his letters, he also noted the women present and helping with the Sanitary Commission. At Sharpsburg, he wrote that “a veritable Mrs. Harris is here, and it’s the very last place for a woman. In the rear in the large city hospitals she is indispensable, but here in the field she only worries both surgeons and patients.” At the hospitals there were many women visiting wounded husbands and sons. Mrs. Metzger, he wrote, visited her son Charles, who had been wounded in the leg with a minie ball. Other women volunteered with the Commission as well and on October 31, 1862, Furness “got the ladies organized this afternoon and hope their whole concern will be in good running by Monday.”

**Shippen, Anna. Letters**  
***Shippen Family Papers***  
**Collection No. 595B, Box 4**

This collection consists of letters written to

Edward Shippen, of 154 Walnut Street, from his mother Anna Shippen, residing in Pottsville, Cressona (both in Schuylkill County, PA), and the Virgin Islands, where she went on an extended trip in 1863.

Anna Shippen, a fervent supporter of the Federal cause, wrote often of news in the papers and the rumors abounding in Pottsville. In a letter dated September 2, 1861, Shippen wrote that the Battle of Bull Run disturbed her because "it is awful to think of such slaughter of human life."

For most of 1863, Shippen was traveling through the Virgin Islands and wrote much of her ocean voyage. She noted these experiences and what little American news she found in the foreign newspapers. She often asked her son to either confirm or deny what she heard about the war.

By 1864, Shippen had returned to Pottsville and in a letter dated August 25, 1864 she wrote of a Confederate deserter who approached her door. He "asked for bread and water. He seemed too much frightened to eat and drink much and with a quick step hurried to find employment."

**Shippen, Augusta Chaucey Twiggs.  
Letters  
*Shippen Family Papers*  
Collection No. 595B, Box 6**

This collection includes the 1861 correspondence between Edward Shippen and his wife Augusta Chaucey Twiggs Shippen (in her letters she never addressed herself using her married name Shippen, rather only Augusta Chaucey Twiggs.) Twiggs often spent winters and vacations with relatives in Georgia, indicating that she was probably from the South, a presumption reinforced by the opinions expressed in her letters. These letters were written to Edward Shippen, who owned his own law business in Philadelphia and later served several diplomatic posts from 1872 to 1898. Her letters reflect the position of a presumed

southern woman married to a northern businessman.

No doubt due to the news circulated in Georgia and the views of her southern friends and family, Twiggs sympathized with the South and its cause in the war: "Everyone I know and see is for disunion. There are in Augusta some few Union men but that party is the minority and very much despised by the secessionists, whom you can't blame when you think of how injured the South has been."

"The feeling here continues to be strong for secession because the tone of the Northern press (which is received as the voice of the people) is so obstinate and so vulgarly abusive." In another letter Twiggs wrote her husband, "The South will bear no more than she has borne. The North has pushed her to the end of the log and now tells her to move a little further, but her spirit is up and she will cling or die to the little they have left."

She questioned her husband for his Union views and asked him, "Is it possible you permit the mean contemptible bellows blowers of the Northern press to distress and disturb you? Can't you see through their rascality? Don't they glorify their own men one day and revile them the next?"

Twiggs felt that slavery was not as bad as many northerners insisted it was. In regard to the death of her friend Sallie, she noted, "the servants all loved and mourn for her most sincerely. Indeed the more I see of the South and slavery as existing here the more ridiculous appears to me the course of the North – she cannot, she won't, and never will understand the true relation between master and slave."

**Shippen, Margaret. Letters  
*Shippen Family Papers*  
Collection No. 595B, Box 2**

This collection includes correspondence between Margaret Shippen and several of her family members. Shippen, 1799-1875, lived

primarily in Philadelphia and a family summer retreat in Lancaster County. Most of the letters are those sent to Shippen at these two locations by various family members.

Many of the letters consisted of daily news and family affairs. On June 25, 1861, for example, Mary Shippen, Margaret Shippen's niece, wrote of her Aunt Margo's accident in a buggy. "The horse took fright at something," she wrote, "and it took six hours to set her bones." Such family news pervades the majority of the letters.

There are some letters concerning war news and family members involved in the war effort. On July 1, 1861, her niece Mary Shippen wrote, "our country is truly in a precarious state and we want true patriotic men to fight for their independence and rights. Their cause is noble and I hope they may be victorious."

On July 6, 1863, Shippen's nephew Franklin Shippen wrote from Meadville, PA of the battle of Gettysburg. He had gone out to the battle site to help in any way that he could in the days after the battle was fought. He wrote of women helping in various ways, both as nurses and through donated contributions, and noted that "the patriotism of those who could not go was well shown by generous contributions to those who went." Later in the letter he wrote that "this morning came the call for nurses and at noon several persons went in answer to it."

Joseph Shippen, another relative, wrote her of his work with the Christian Commission and the women he encountered while working for the organization. These women, he wrote, were excellent workers and he frequently praised their efforts. On June 6, 1864, he noted his work teaching both young men and women. "Under my influence a Soldier's Aid Society had been formed. Our young people have been inspired with a sympathy for the suffering and a love for the country which is beautiful to behold."

**Taylor, Margaretta H. Jones. Letters**  
***Jones and Taylor Family Papers***

## **Collection No. 2037**

The few 1861 letters of Margaretta Taylor from Winchester, Virginia, to her brother are housed in this collection. Her father, Benjamin Jones, and her brother, Andrew Jones, were both merchants and land speculators in Philadelphia. Taylor described her daily life in these few letters. She was very involved in her garden and wrote of it often.

There are a few references to the war in the letters. Taylor did not support the southern cause and felt the South was wrong, perhaps because she had been raised in Philadelphia. "This dreadful war makes my heart ache. We need chastisement for our many sins and we must bow in submission," wrote Taylor of the southern states on November 1, 1861. In the same letter, she feared that there were "many secessionists in the neighborhood" and did not know what to expect from them.

## **Wetherill, Anna Thorpe. Anti-slavery letters.**

### ***Edward Wetherill Collection***

### **Call No. Am .18655**

Anna Thorpe Wetherill, an abolitionist from Philadelphia, created scrapbooks containing abolitionist correspondence written by herself, Edward Wetherill, the man she married in 1863, and other abolitionists in the area. The Wetherills were very active in assisting escaped slaves and sheltering them in their home at 911 Clinton Street.

Incorporated into the scrapbook are newspaper clippings about the death of Harriet Tubman in 1913, a runaway slave who worked on the underground railroad, and photographs of such notable abolitionists as William Lloyd Garrison, founder of the abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*. There are newspaper clippings of southern slave auctions and others describing runaway slaves whose masters were advertising for their return.

Wetherill participated in the United States Sanitary Fair and there were letters addressed to her concerning meetings and plans for the fair, which was held in 1864 in Logan Square. Thomas Garrett, who referred to Anna Wetherill as a “friend and fellow laborer” in assisting runaway slaves, wrote some of the other letters included in the scrapbook. Garrett, a Quaker from Wilmington, was an abolitionist and aided several hundred runaways, including Harriet Tubman, by providing a safe house for them on their journey north.

Wetherill work as a suffragist in the 1890s is reflected in the later part of this collection.

**Wister, Sarah Butler. Letters**  
**Wister and Butler families papers** <sup>[8]</sup>  
**Collection No. 1962**

This collection includes letters that Sarah Butler Wister, living in Germantown, wrote her mother, Fanny Kemble, who was living in England. Fanny Kemble, born in 1809, was a famous actress and accomplished writer of prose and verse. Sarah, born in 1835, was the first of her two children. Kemble, an abolitionist, was divorced from her husband, Pierce Butler, a large and wealthy slaveholder, and returned to England from the United States in the 1840s. In 1838, while staying on their Butler Island Georgia plantation with her family, she wrote her experiences in a series of letters she later published as *The Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*. Her children, Sarah and Frances, remained in the states. Sarah married Owen Wister and they had several children, the eldest named Owen.

Sarah Wister wrote a great deal about her daily routine and local news. She noted the news from the paper of the Peninsula Campaign and worried for her husband because he was stationed in that area. She volunteered at the local hospital in Nicetown, and during her first five months, 2500 patients were seen and only 15 died. Included within the hospital was a chapel and reading room,

which she regarded as necessary for recovery. She worked at a Parish school near her house as well.

Many of the letters are dated 1863. During this year, Sarah wrote of both local and national news. She noted the draft riots of New York and how other cities feared the same outcome. She traveled to a "Negro encampment" in 1863 and saw black federal soldiers. Wister was "in awe at how perfect they kept the ground and how well they looked in their uniforms." After the battle of Gettysburg, in July of that year, she noted that there were so many wounded soldiers that many were sent to the Nicetown hospital. "Our store rooms had to be used as a ward and we were forced to give up our work [cooking and cleaning]." She related a story of one woman at the time who was upset that her baked goods would spoil because of this. Sarah apparently told her that they would not go to waste because "all the soldiers will eat them - be assured." Such personal stories infuse her letters.

Wister provides an example of a married woman whose responsibilities kept her home. She volunteered at her local hospital rather than travel as younger women with less dependants would be more likely to do.

## **Wister, Sarah Logan. Letters** ***Fox Family Papers*** <sup>[8]</sup> **Collection No. 2028**

This correspondence is between Sarah Logan Wister of Philadelphia and her half sister Mary R. Fox, wife of Samuel Mickle Fox. The Fox family of Foxburg, Clarion County, Pennsylvania, was related to Thomas Rodman and Letitia Ellicott Fisher (see Letitia Ellicott Fisher under Letters).

These three letters are from the years 1862 and 1863. The first letter, dated November 9, 1862, noted Wister's daily life with some mention of the war. Wister and Fox's father, William Logan Wister, had died the previous September, and she wrote of the grieving

process of both herself and her mother.

Wister wrote of the war effort and what she was doing to help. She sent her cousin, Frank, who was away at war, "clothing which as the weather has set in so cold I am sure he greatly needs." She wrote of the war news she had read in the papers in Philadelphia. "McClellan has been superceded by Burnside. No reason is given. No one knows what it means, his position has been no doubt a very difficult one to fill. Frank has always been enthusiastic for him."

The second letter, July 7, 1863, relayed some of the news of the battle of Gettysburg. "I know you are all anxious about the battle and our boys," she wrote. "A number of wounded soldiers have come to the Germantown hospital," where it appears she may have been volunteering. The letter goes on to mention some of the family friends who had come away from the battle either alive and well or wounded. One particular boy, Lang, had been shot in the neck and had injured his mouth very badly. The severity of his wounds was still uncertain.

## **Organizations**

### **Ladies Aid Society**

*see E. H. Harris under Letters*

### **Ladies Soldiers Aid Society: Minutes from meetings (1863-1865)**

**Call No. Am .15602, Am .156020**

These two volumes contain the minutes from the meetings of this society, located in Weldon, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Included are the rules of the organization and membership. The purpose of the organization was to "relieve the suffering now prevailing among our sick and wounded soldiers." It cost 25 cents to become a member and the meetings were held on a weekly basis.

Like many members of aid societies, the women sent articles, listed in the minutes, to

soldiers at different locations where they felt they were needed the most, initially relying almost entirely on newspaper reports. The women visited nearby hospitals, including Chestnut Hill Hospital and the Citizens' Volunteer Hospital, and donated articles such as shirts, slippers, and muslin to recovering soldiers. These women would then report at the following meetings as to the treatment of the men and how they were fairing at the given hospital they had visited.

By 1864, the Ladies Soldiers Aid Society was receiving letters from soldiers and officers asking them for items they needed and requesting the women to help supply them directly, certainly a sign of the need for such an organization and of the Aid Society's success. After the battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, for example, there were letters requesting bandages and handkerchiefs for the wounded, and many were subsequently sent.

## **Ladies Spring Garden Aid Association**

*See Amanda Merkle under Diaries*

## **Office for the Relief of Families of Philadelphia Volunteers** **HSP collection of Civil War papers,** **1861-1878** <sup>[9]</sup> **Collection No. 1546**

This small collection consists of the treasurer's notes and receipts of checks sent to families throughout the city. This was not an organization run by women and there were no women working for them. However, this money was given to women to support them while their husbands and fathers were fighting. The monetary amounts of the checks range from 10 to 50 dollars depending on the number of children and other circumstances.

The information contained in the collection is not substantial because the bulk is receipts. The names on the receipts are those of men fighting, and do not include the first names of

the women who received assistance.

**Penn Relief Association: By-laws,  
Minutes, committees, accounts, and  
correspondences**

**Call No. Am .697, Am .6971, Am  
.6972, Am .6974, and Am .6973**

The collection consists of several volumes spanning the years of the Penn Relief Association's activity, beginning in May 1862 and ending several months after the war's end.

The association's constitution (call no. Am .697), which is in poor condition, stated the rules and why the organization was created: to "alleviate the sufferings of soldiers in National Military Hospitals." Several women's names were signed with their addresses as the founding members. Included were the first bylaws of the group and the rules for running the organization.

The minutes of their meetings (call no. Am .6971) listed different committees organized within the association. Each had distinct responsibilities, such as the hospital committee, the work committee, the store committee, and an inspection committee. In order for all to run smoothly, each had certain tasks to accomplish. Some inspected hospitals to see how they were faring and what supplies they needed. Others produced the requested supplies that were subsequently sent to the hospitals. At the Christian Street Hospital and West Philadelphia Hospital, for example, the association donated flannel shirts, pickles and preserves, leather supplies, and dried fruit over the course of one month. Still more women made bandages and sent them to battlefields, from which letters had been written asking the women for assistance. For instance, several members traveled to Gettysburg to volunteer with the wounded on July 16, 1863, not long after the battle.

Two volumes of notes of the Executive Committee of the Association are included (call no. Am .6972). These document the activities the women performed, their names

and addresses, a listing of all the hospitals visited such as West Philadelphia Hospital and the hospital at Wood and 22nd Sts., and listings of their donations to the hospitals including pillows, towels, sheets, slippers, and bandages. There were letters included from various hospitals in several states asking for certain things they needed. The two volumes are in good condition.

The treasurer's accounts are in four volumes (call no. Am .6974). Listings include what the organization bought, such as advertisements in the *Philadelphia Gazette*. There were also several donations of needles, yarn, mosquito netting, and marking ink recorded.

Selections of correspondence to the Pennsylvania Relief Association (call no. Am .6973) contain many letters of thanks for the organization's donations to different hospitals. The secretary of the organization copied the letters into this volume. Other letters were included from surgeons asking for needed items, and in some cases, for anything at all. A doctor from West Philadelphia Hospital said, "We will be most thankful for anything else you have to spare for us at anytime. A many thanks to you all."

The correspondence included in this collection demonstrates the great importance this organization of women had during the war years. The several letters of gratitude for their efforts confirms that women's organizations such as this did provide a substantial amount of help to the hospitals in Philadelphia as well as several battlefields beyond the local area.

## **Pennsylvania Relief Association for East Tennessee**

see *United States Sanitary Commission Philadelphia branch, Collection No. 679* [10]

A handful of records from this organization can be found with the papers of the Philadelphia Branch of the U.S. Sanitary Commission (collection 679). This organization was created to "relieve the sufferings of the people of E. Tennessee, the only portion of the South

which has preserved unshaken its fidelity to the flag of the United States." Two pamphlets, some receipts for money sent to Tennessee, and notes on the first few meetings are included.

**Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society**  
***Pennsylvania Abolition Society papers***  
**Collection No. 490**

This collection consists of the minutes of monthly meetings, held on Race Street, of the Female Anti-Slavery Society, organized in 1833. The organization assisted both freed and enslaved African Americans. This society was biracial and consisted of many notable women including Lucretia Mott, a Quaker co-founder of the society, ardent abolitionist, and women's rights activist, and Sarah Pugh, the president of the organization.

During the Civil War years (vols. 5 and 6), the women continued their earlier efforts of helping both escaped slaves and freed men and women. The society organized the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Fair several years before the outbreak of the war. The women sold donated items at these fairs including clothing, produce, and other sundries. In 1861, the fair was held December 17th-20th and the organization raised \$1,350 dollars through their efforts.

Members traveled to Washington and reported at the monthly meetings about meeting William Lloyd Garrison, an abolitionist and founder of the *Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper, and participating in other activities in the city. Reports of contraband camps in the city were investigated. Rachel Jackson, a society member and visitor to Washington in November 1862, reported that she found these camps to be in poor condition and their inhabitants destitute. The government, she reported, "supplied the men with jobs and pay, but the women and children were suffering to the greatest degree." They slept in tents and sheds throughout the cold months and were

provided with little food and meat. "Some effort must be done to afford them relief," she commented, and observed that the contraband hospital was just as indigent. It was crowded and in "terrible condition," and filled with people suffering from typhoid fever and sore throats.

There were guests at the September 1862 meeting who recounted escaping from bondage in Beaufort, South Carolina. It was a "graphic discussion" of traveling six days and nights without food until at last they "reached the Union army and General Sherman."

At the January 1865 meeting, the members composed a letter to be sent to certain railroad companies in the city that did not permit African Americans to ride in their cars. They received letters back from these companies stating that they were taking their complaints "under consideration" and would discuss a possible change in their laws. There was no evidence in the minutes of later meetings that anything actually changed.

Also in January, the women wrote to Congress in Washington asking for an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting slavery in the United States (by this time the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued but there was no further assurance of the prohibition of slavery). They felt that "justice to the slaves and the permanent safety of the nation required" such an amendment. There is no evidence in the collection that Congress responded to their letter.

## **Soldier's Relief Association**

*See Katherine Johnson Brinley Wharton under Diaries*

## **Union Benevolent Association 1858-1871**

***Coates and Reynell Family Papers*** <sup>[11]</sup>

### **Collection No. 140**

This organization, created and run by women, provided for others in the local community of

Philadelphia. This association was organized three years before the war broke out and remained in existence for seven years after it ceased. They donated necessary items such as coal, groceries, and garments to needy families. Through donations they were able to provide these necessities. They also visited the sick and dying and prayed with them to help them find God before death. Those who visited were paid a sum of money, usually a dollar per visit. The war did not appear to affect their work, as there was absolutely no mention of it in the minutes of the organization. They continued to help those in need in the community rather than turn their attention to the soldiers. There did appear to be more needy people in the city during the war years, which indicated that the war's impact on the civilian population increased the need for community relief organizations.

This material is mainly comprised of lists of donations and visitations to needy and there are no named leaders of the organization and few other names mentioned.

**Union Volunteer Refreshment  
Saloon: newspaper clippings, notes,  
flyers, and minutes of meetings  
Call No. Am .67040**

The Union Volunteer Refreshment Saloon, begun in May 1861, had a list of duties, as described in a newspaper article pinned to the front of the book, including devotion to soldiers, benevolent and patriotic duties, entertainment, meals, nursing, and hospital care for those needing it. Between May 1861 and November 1862, nearly half a million men came through their doors. All of this was done in one building on lower Washington Street in Philadelphia. There were two committees that comprised this organization: one for men and the other for women.

The notes in this book were solely from the women's committee, known as the Ladies Volunteer Refreshment Committee. They had weekly meetings, at which they discussed what to do for the soldiers away from home.

The women cut out and sewed many articles of clothing to be sent to soldiers in need. The items they sent included soap, tea, drawers, and slippers and went to various locations, including Virginia, Missouri, and Kentucky. The minutes reflect a division of responsibilities in many different sub-committees of women serving different purposes.

The volume includes several lists. One pertained to regiments that stopped at the Refreshment Saloon each day and how many men were in each. There was another listing of prisoners that were released from Richmond who stopped in Philadelphia on their way home. Also, a list of dead soldiers with information on their company, age, and location of death is included in the back of the volume. After the war had ended, many of the regiments came through the city on their way north and west. Many of these regiments were also listed, next to a small patch from their regimental flags pinned into the volume. Next to each was a list of the battles where these flags had flown.

Many flyers and advertisements for fundraising events held to help the soldiers are also contained here. Some examples were lectures at the Academy of Music, an address on war also held at the Academy, and concerts in many different locations throughout the city.

## **United States Christian Commission**

*See Helen S. Grier under Diaries*

## **United States Sanitary Commission Philadelphia Branch, 1864 Great Central Fair of the United States Sanitary Commission Newspaper committee minutes Call No. Am .399**

This volume contains the minutes of the Newspaper Committee for the Great Central Fair held in Logan Square in June 1864. The Sanitary Commission decided that due to the

need for publicity for the Fair, they would have their own newspaper distributed to advertise the event. The entire committee in charge of this endeavor was comprised of women. The meetings were held weekly at various members' houses throughout the city. There are only minutes for six meetings, the last being held May 4, 1864, one month before the Fair. Their main concern was what to put in the paper pertaining to the Fair. For example, "In small type, the list of goods to be on sale in this Fair will be printed and two or three pages will follow filled with reports of the Fair."

**United States Sanitary Commission**  
**Philadelphia Branch collection, 1864**  
**Collection No. 679** <sup>[10]</sup>

The United States Sanitary Commission Philadelphia Branch collection includes materials on several humanitarian efforts made by this association during the Civil War. The collection consists primarily of bills, vouchers, receipts, checkbooks, and other financial papers, but also includes the correspondence of Mrs. Thomas P. James, relating to her work as chair of the Ladies' Committee on Relics, Curiosities & Autographs for the Great Central Fair held in 1864, as well as ephemera from the fair. The collection includes a small amount of materials from other Philadelphia war relief efforts, including the Pennsylvania Relief Association for East Tennessee and the Testimonial Fund for Major General David B. Birney.

This collection includes several letters thanking people for all the help they had given to ensure that the Great Central Fair would be a success. Some women donated clothing and other various items such as knapsacks and shawls to be sold at the fair. A letter enclosed with a package to the commission wrote, "The two articles we send are of some value to us, but if they can contribute to the comfort of our soldiers we shall be well pleased." Another woman who sent a dress to be sold wrote she would do anything "for the benefit of our wounded heroes."

There are also several letters from different organizations. For example, the "Ladies at St. James Church" wrote to tell the commission they would "continue their present efforts to labor for the sick and wounded by making the fair the object of their efforts." Notes from the newspaper correspondence committee, headed by Miss E.H. Haven are included. This committee was in charge of sending information to the local papers pertaining to the fair and creating a small newspaper to be published as an advertisement for the fair.

The collection also includes a flyer from the Committee on Sewing, inviting women throughout Pennsylvania and other nearby states to help by sewing items to be sold at the fair. Those who could not contribute materials could contribute labor and vice versa. The committee would supply fabric if women would donate time to help sew. The chair of this committee was Mrs. Coleman Jacobs of 1836 Pine Street. There is a flyer from the Committee on Hats, Caps, and Furs inviting countrywomen of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware to prepare articles such as smoking caps, children's caps, and bathing caps to be sold at the Great Fair.

The minutes of the Philadelphia Branch of the Sanitary Commission, which begin in 1861, are also included in this collection. The Ladies Committee (a sub-committee of the Sanitary Commission), organized February 27, 1861, was mentioned several times in these minutes. "The Ladies Branch had much exceeded the expectations of those interested in its establishment, and will continue to increase its operations and usefulness." This branch sent monthly reports of their activities to the Central Sanitary Commission. One committee under the Ladies branch was the Special Relief Committee. Their job was to "assist sick and disabled soldiers and their families and procure transportation for discharged men."

This collection also includes previously unprocessed materials including items from a scrapbook from the Great Central Fair.

## **United States Sanitary Commission and the Ladies Central Committee on Musical Entertainments Call No. Am .8897**

This collection consists of the notes of the Ladies Central Committee of Musical Entertainments during 1864. This committee was responsible for planning advertised activities in the hopes of raising money for the Sanitary Commission. The chairman of the committee was Mrs. William Biddle of 1500 Locust Street.

Concerts were held at the Academy of Music and in the parlors of private homes. The amount of money received was noted as well as the members who volunteered to help at each concert. For example, the committee raised 200 dollars from a parlor concert held at committee member Mrs. M. W. Baldwin's house at 1031 Spruce Street, on April 11, 1864.

The remainder of the collection documents donations the committee received for their endeavors. Such items included an accordion, donated by Miss Annie Hooper, and a piano cover, donated by William Cameron, as well as several monetary donations.

## **United States Sanitary Commission**

*See Kate Rodgers, Letitia Ellicott Fisher, and Elizabeth Mifflin under Letters*

*See Lizzie Marchand, and Susan Trautwine McManus under Diaries*

[Women's Views on the Civil War](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

[Civil War Manuscripts & Newspapers](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

[Civil War Resources](#) <sup>[14]</sup>

[A Civil War Dining Experience: the Ellen](#)

[Emlen Cookbook](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

[New Civil War-Related Books](#) <sup>[16]</sup>

[Visual Culture of the Civil War Available](#)

[17] [Military Records,  
Military History, and  
Wars](#) [18]  
[New Books on Civil  
War History Recently  
Cataloged](#) [19]  
[Women's History  
Resources](#) [20]  
[New Titles Added to  
the Civil War Collection](#)  
[21]  
[New Publications on  
the Civil War Now in  
the Library](#) [22]  
[New Titles Now in the  
Civil War Collection](#) [23]  
[Additions to the Civil  
War Collection](#) [24]

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[2] <http://hsp.org/collections/catalogs-research-tools/subject-guides/civil-war-manuscripts-newspapers>  
[3] <http://www.hsp.org/sites/www.hsp.org/files/migrated/findingaid0164davis.pdf>  
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[10] <http://www2.hsp.org/collections/manuscripts/u/USSanitaryCommission679.html>  
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[12] <https://hsp.org/blogs/fondly-pennsylvania/womens-views-on-the-civil-war>  
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[14] <https://hsp.org/collections/catalogs-research-tools/subject-guides/civil-war-resources>  
[15] <https://hsp.org/calendar/a-civil-war-dining-experience-the-ellen-emlen-cookbook>  
[16] <https://hsp.org/blogs/new-in-the-library/new-civil-war-related-books>  
[17] <https://hsp.org/blogs/educators-blog/visual-culture-of-the-civil-war-available>  
[18] <https://hsp.org/collections/catalogs-research-tools/subject-guides/military-records-military-history-and-wars>  
[19] <https://hsp.org/blogs/new-in-the-library/new-books-on-civil-war-history-recently-cataloged>  
[20] <https://hsp.org/collections/catalogs-research-tools/subject-guides/womens-history-resources>  
[21] <https://hsp.org/blogs/new-in-the-library/new-titles-added-to-the-civil-war-collection>  
[22] <https://hsp.org/blogs/new-in-the-library/new-publications-on-the-civil-war-now-in-the-library>  
[23] <https://hsp.org/blogs/new-in-the-library/new-titles-now-in-the-civil-war-collection>  
[24] <https://hsp.org/blogs/new-in-the-library/additions-to-the-civil-war-collection>