



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 1609

John Wheaton Lynch
Papers

1860-1866

1 box, 0.4 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: Elizabeth Kata

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Abstract

John Wheaton Lynch (1839-1907) was born in Baltimore, Maryland. He worked as a salesman until the onset of the Civil War, when he helped recruit for the 106th Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. The regiment was mustered in on August 24, 1861, and Lynch served as a first lieutenant. On January 9, 1863, he was promoted to captain, and on September 7, 1863, he was discharged for disability. After being discharged, he worked as a salesman in New York and Boston. Upon returning to Philadelphia, he started the Safety Storage Van & Packing Co. He married Elizabeth Jillard Mustin of Philadelphia on June 22, 1865. They had four sons: John, Thornton, Percival, and Jasper.

The collection contains letters John Wheaton Lynch wrote to his fiancée Elizabeth (Bessie) J. Mustin. The letters span from April 1860 to June 1865, shortly before their marriage. A large number of letters chronicle John's service in the 106th Pennsylvania Volunteers during the Civil War. The single letter from 1866 was written by Bessie to John, and a few letters to Bessie from others are mingled in with John's letters. Besides the letters, there are a few sketches and clippings that John sent to Bessie.

Background note

John Wheaton Lynch was born in Baltimore, Maryland on June 23, 1839. His parents, John Hylton Lynch and Mary Moyes, were both born outside of the United States; his father was born in Kingston, Jamaica and his mother was born in Providence, England. Little is known about John W. Lynch's life before his military service, but he apparently worked as a salesman.

Lynch helped recruit for the 106th Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers in 1861. The regiment was mustered in on August 24, 1861, and John W. Lynch served as a first lieutenant. The 106th saw action at many notable battles, including Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. On January 9, 1863, he was promoted to captain, and on September 7, 1863, he was discharged for disability. The disability was a heart condition, which he was thought to have acquired during military service.

After his discharge, he worked as a salesman in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. He married Elizabeth (Bessie) Jillard Mustin of Philadelphia in that city at Tabernacle Baptist Church on June 22, 1865. Bessie Mustin, born April 7, 1837, was the daughter of John Mustin Sr. (1787-1862) and his second wife Anne Litchthall. John Mustin Sr. ran a business, called at various times Mustin & Bennett, John Mustin & Son, and after his death, T.J. Mustin and Co. The store sold imported trimmings and hosiery and knit items. Thomas J. Mustin, John Sr.'s grandson who took over the business, sold the business to John Wanamaker in 1887.

John Wheaton Lynch and his wife Bessie had four sons: John (b. 1866), Thornton (b. 1867), Percival (b. 1871), and Jasper (b. 1874). He and his family moved to Boston, and he worked in a commission house. Later they returned to Philadelphia, where he owned and operated a storage company, which his son Thornton took over after his death, at which time it was called Safety Storage Van and Packing Co. John Wheaton Lynch died April 1, 1907, and he is buried in West Laurel Hill Cemetery. His wife Bessie died in 1918.

Scope & content

The John Wheaton Lynch papers consist of 154 letters dating from 1860 to 1866. Lynch wrote the letters to his fiancée Bessie J. Mustin of Philadelphia. The letters are written on a variety of stationery, and John occasionally included drawings, newspaper clippings, pressed flowers, and other items. Although some of these items appear in the collection, many of the items he sent to Bessie were most likely retained in a scrapbook (not a part of this collection) that John referred to in his letters. Bessie noted on many envelopes the date she received a letter and the date she responded. Most of the envelopes are with the letters they held; many envelopes are missing the stamps and postage marks, which someone removed.

John's letters from May 9, 1861, through August 24, 1863 chronicle his time in the 106th Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers during the Civil War. The letters are personal, and he wrote affectionately to Bessie, whom he often referred to as "Puss." Much of what he wrote was in reply to what she had written to him about people and home life. He sometimes complained to her about having the "blues" and looked to her for comfort. He wrote on February 2, 1863, "When I say that 'I love you,' I mean that those words are a consolation of everything I cherish & hold sacred in my memory. It means just what it says, & what your heart gives you the definition of."

Lynch also wrote about camp life, and he talked about picket duty, the weather, the food, camp entertainments (which he often frowned upon), and "chin music" or camp gossip. He commented on generals such as Burnside (and his "Mud March" in January, 1863), Sumner, and McClellan. He often wrote about the difficulties he encountered in attempts to attain leave; in one occasion that he wrote about on January 20, 1863, he described Gen. Sumner's refusal to sign his application for leave. He also complained often about press accounts of the Civil War; and he felt that the press painted too bleak a picture to the people at home. He found the press demoralizing and misleading, and he warned Bessie against taking too much stock in their reports. Although he wrote fairly

little about individual battles, he did occasionally mention heavy losses. He conveyed the dropping morale that occurred beginning in the second half of 1862. In a letter dated New Year's Day, 1863, he wrote:

I can indeed heartily endorse your closing prayer of your letter of the 23rd namely, 'that the coming year may a more blessed and happy year to us both' and will extend this to our beloved country for indeed everything looks now darker now to me than they ever have been ever before.

The lowered morale lasted until news of Grant's victories combined with the Union's success at Gettysburg in 1863. He wrote one letter directly before (June 30, 1863) and one directly after (July 5, 1863) Gettysburg, which are short but poignant letters, and he described the role his regiment and company played in the battle.

After he was discharged on September 7, 1863, John W. Lynch wrote from various locations while working as a salesman based out of New York. He often wrote on Sundays, and he described and quoted sermons he heard. Although he was a Baptist, he occasionally went to hear sermons from preachers of other denominations. His letters continue until June 9, 1865, shortly before he married Bessie.

There are a few letters scattered throughout the folders that were not written by John W. Lynch. One letter begins "Dear Brother" and was written by a Miss Rachel. Another letter (from July 9, 1864) came from "Josey." Bessie wrote the single letter from the year 1866 to John, a day after their first wedding anniversary.

Separation report

None.

Bibliography

“Chronological List.” July 17, 2005. <<http://www.civilwar.com/batthome1.htm>>

“Table of Contents – Mustin Family.” July 18, 2005.

<<http://members.fortunecity.com/mustin/>>

Ward, Joseph R.C. *History of the One hundred and sixth regiment, Pennsylvania volunteers, 2d brigade, 2d division, 2d corps, 1861-1865*. Philadelphia: F. McManus, Jr. & Co., 1906

Subjects

Courtship – 19th century

Pennsylvania – History – Civil War, 1861-1865

Spouses – Correspondence

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

United States. Army. Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment, 106th (1861-1865)

Lynch, John Wheaton

Mustin, Elizabeth J. (Elizabeth Jillard), 1837-1918

Administrative Information

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Purchased, 1949.

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item here], John Wheaton Lynch Papers (Collection 1609), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note

Processing made possible by a generous gift from Robert Lynch and Elaine L. Jones.

Box and folder listing

Box 1.

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Letters	Apr. – Oct., 1860	3 items	1	1
Letters	Jan. – Jul., 1861	14 items	1	2
Letters	Sept. – Dec., 1861	10 items	1	3
Letters	Jan. – Feb., 1862	8 items	1	4
Letters	March – April, 1862	10 items	1	5
Letters	May – June, 1862	6 items	1	6
Letters	July – Aug., 1862	9 items	1	7
Letters	Sept. – Oct., 1862	8 items	1	8
Letters	Nov. – Dec., 1862	12 items	1	9
Letters	Jan. – Feb., 1863	8 items	1	10
Letters	March – April, 1863	10 items	1	11
Letters	May – July, 1863	11 items	1	12
Letters	Aug. – Dec., 1863	9 items	1	13
Letters	Jan. – Mar., 1864	9 items	1	14
Letters	April – June, 1864	6 items	1	15
Letters	Jul. – Dec., 1864	7 items	1	16
Letters	1865	10 items	1	17
Letters	1866 and undated	4 items	1	18