

**Guide to the
John L. Barry Civil War Letters**



**Gettysburg College, Musselman Library
Special Collections & College Archives**

Created by Kate Boeree

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MS-105: John L. Barry Civil War Letters

Processed by Kate Boeree

June 2009

1 box (.27 cubic foot)

Dates:

20 June 1861 – 18 August 1862

Provenance:

Purchased from Charles Apfelbaum in 2009.

Biography:

John L. Barry of Dunkirk, New York enlisted in the army as a private on May 16th 1861 at the age of 25, where he joined Company E 72nd Infantry Regiment of New York – Excelsior Brigade. He was killed in combat July 1st, 1862 at the Battle of Malvern Hill, the last of the Seven Days Battles in Henrico County, Virginia.

Scope and Content Note:

This collection contains 47 letters, 37 of which are written by John L. Barry during his time in the Civil War between 20 June 1861 and 7 June 1862. The letters are written to his family in Dunkirk, New York, addressing his mother, father, sister Ellen, and brother Robert.

Throughout all of these letters John describes his living conditions, the status of the Rebel troops, and his concern and love for his family, as well as a few interesting stories from life on the front. He describes what he had heard about the Battle of Bull Run (28 July 1861). In one letter he tells of a fake funeral procession in which they discovered the coffin to be filled with guns and the minister was a Rebel captain (13 October 1861). Another story is about a soldier picking up a live shell and bringing it back to camp, where he accidentally set it off, killing himself and badly wounding ten others (26 October 1861). He also gives details about helping with an amputation (4 November 1861), and a young soldier committing suicide (29 December 1861). In January of 1862 his camp imprisons three men who were crossing the river. They are dressed as civilians and claim that they don't belong to the Rebel troops, but the Union men assume that they are Rebel spies (3 January 1862). In February of 1862 Barry starts mentioning the possibility of his death, particularly after making gravestones for two men from his camp (1 February 1862). His last letter is dated 7 June 1862, less than one month before he was killed at the Battle of Malvern Hill.

Additional correspondence in this collection (Folder 1-5) includes five letters from family friend Anthony J. Softus, also a soldier in the Civil War, addressed to his mother, Ellen and Robert Barry; two letters from John's sister Mary Barry, addressed to Ellen Barry; one letter from Charles Griffith

addressed to Robert Barry; and one letter from Dennis Barry, John's uncle, addressed to John's father in sympathy shortly after hearing of John's death.

Letters are arranged chronologically.

Box List:

1-1 Finding Aid & Biographical Information

1-2 1861 Letters from John L. Barry

- 20 June 1861 "Dear Rob + Ellen" Camp Scott, Staten Island (1 page)
- 23 June 1861 "Dear Robert" Camp Scott, Staten Island (1 page, envelope included)
- 9 July 1861 "Dear Rob" Camp Scott, Staten Island (1 page)
- 28 July 1861 "Dear Rob" Camp Marsh (1 page)
- 15 August 1861 "Dear Brother + Sister Rob + Ellen" Camp Caldwell (1 page)
- 25 August 1861 "Dear Brother + Sister Rob + Ellen" (1 page)
- 1 September 1861 "Dear Rob + Ellen" Camp Caldwell (1 page)
- 14 September 1861 "Dear Friend Robert Smith" Camp Caldwell (1 page)
- 14 September 1861 "Dear Brother" Camp Caldwell (1 page)
- 22 September 1861 "Dear Brother Rob + Sister Ellen" (1 page)
- 29 September 1861 "My Dear Brother Rob + Sister Ellen" Camp Caldwell (1 page, envelope included)
- 5 October 1861 "Dear Brother Robert + Sister Ellen" Camp Caldwell (1 page)
- 13 October 1861 "My Dear Robert + Ellen" Camp Caldwell (1 page)
- 23 October 1861 "My dear Brother Robert" Camp Caldwell (2 pages)
- 26 October 1861 "Dear Brother Robert + Sister Ellen" Camp Caldwell (1 page)
- 4 November 1861 "My Dear Sister Ellen" Camp Caldwell (1 page)
- 10 November 1861 "Dear Sister Ellen" (1 page)
- 14 November 1861 "Dear Brother Robert" (1 page)
- 22 November 1861 "Dear brother Robert + Sister Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page)
- 4 December 1861 "My Dear Brother Robert + Sister Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page, envelope included)
- 15 December 1861 "My Dear Brother Rob + Sister Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page)
- 23 December 1861 "My Dear + Beloved Robert + Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page)
- 29 December 1861 "My Loving Brother + Sister" Sandy Point (1 page, envelope included)

1-3 1862 Letters from John L. Barry

- 3 January 1862 "My Loving Sister Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page)
- 9 January 1862 "My Loving Sister Ellen and Brother Robert" Camp Wool (1 page)
- 12 January 1862 "My Loving Sister Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page)
- 16 January 1862 "My Loving Sister Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page, envelope included)
- 26 January 1862 "My Loving Sister Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page)
- 1 February 1862 "Dear Brother Robert" Camp Wool (1 page, envelope included)

- 18 February 1862 "My Loving Sister Ellen" Camp Wool (2 pages, envelope included)
- 28 February 1862 "My Loving Sister Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page)
- 23 March 1862 "My Dear + Loving Brother Robert + Sister Ellen" Old Place (1 page)
- 18 May 1862 "My Dear + Loving Sister Ellen" (1 page, damaged)
- 2 May 1862 "My Dear Father" Camp Winfield Scott (1 page)
- 7 June 1862 "Dear Sister Ellen" (1 page, envelope included)

1-4 Undated letters from John L. Barry

- Undated "Dear Sister Ellen" (1 page)
- Undated "She has written some..." incomplete letter (1 page)

1-5 Other Correspondence

- 17 October 1858 "Dear sister Ellen (1 page) From Mary
- 9 August 1861 "Dear sister Ellen" (1 page) from Mary
- 9 January 1862 "My Dear Mother" (1 page) From Anthony J. Softus
- 23 January 1862 "Friend Robert" Oakville (1 page) From Charles Griffith
- 25 January 1862 "Dear Friend Ellen" Camp Wool (1 page) From Anthony J. Softus
- 1 February 1862 "Mrs. Ellen Smith" Camp Wool (1 page) From Anthony J. Softus
- 18 August 1862 "My Dear + Beloved Brother" from Dennis (uncle) (1 page)
- Undated, from Anthony J. Softus - Incomplete (1 page)
- Undated "Dear Mrs. Smith" From Annie Griffith (1 page)
- Undated "Rob Smith" From Anthony J. Loftus (1 page)

1-6 Miscellaneous Envelopes