

**CW/VFM- 61: *Eric McGrail***

Glass bottle with forged note

Frank Richards  
John J. Cressman  
Philip Doerr

The above listed men were members of the class of 1864 at Pennsylvania College who enlisted in the 26<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Militia Infantry, co. A in order to protect Pennsylvania from Lee's invasion. On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1961, the college found a bottle near the library. Upon inspection, it was found to contain a piece of paper dated June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1863. This piece of paper contained the names of these students, pledging their lives to the protection of their "beloved college."

Eric McGrail, a student at the college at the time, claimed that he had created it as a hoax for his roommate. He had bought the bottle from an antique dealer, making sure that it was of the correct period, and prepared the paper before he wrote on it. He then placed it where the workmen were felling trees so that they would find it as his roommate appeared and he would be deceived by the find. Distrusting his story, college authorities were notified of his story. Upon which time the inquiring individuals were informed that McGrail didn't have a roommate. Also, they wanted to know if it was a forgery, how he had known that those individuals had all been in the 26<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, Co. A. He was surprised to hear that all three were actually in the correct regiment and company.

Glass:

Modern-no indications of sand or imperfections

Green-possibility of French or Spanish MFG; not American in design or MFG. MTH.

\*wine bottle?

Cork- could not remove from bt'l

\*wax-modern candle; not handmade or dipped-color

Paper: Letter

Modern-fine weave, rag

ink-not aged! double bit pen point

1860-single bit point

writing-modern; clear, concise, and readable; script typical of the era

paper was dampened prior to writing

seal- was probably from some religious or fraternal organization.

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Report of Events to Dean Shainline:  
Original document: 3pp. (2 copies)

Report of Authenticity by Norgan:  
Original document: 1pp.

*Bottle is currently located in the Artifact Collection*

**Keywords:** Gettysburg – College & Battle

**Location:** Civil War Vertical File Manuscripts, Special Collections & College Archives,  
Musselman Library at Gettysburg College.

**See also:** [Civil War Sources in Special Collections](#)