

Guide to MS-072:

Adin B. Thayer, Co. B, 16th Maine Volunteer Infantry



Gettysburg College, Musselman Library
Special Collections and College Archives

Christopher Gwinn
June 2006

MS-072: Adin B. Thayer, Co. B, 16th Maine Volunteer Infantry

Processed by Christopher Gwinn
June 2006

Size

1 box, 0.27 feet

Dates

Inclusive: 1862-1865

Provenance

Purchased from Charles Apfelbaum, 2005.

Biographical Note

Eighteen year old Adin B. Thayer, from the town of West Waterville, Maine enlisted in the 16th Maine Volunteer Infantry on August 14th, 1862, following Abraham Lincoln's second call for volunteers to put down the rebellion. He listed his marital status as single and it can be surmised that his occupation was that of a farmer considering his repeated inquires about the spring planting and the welfare of the crops and his colt. He was assigned to Company B of the 16th regiment and joined the Army of the Potomac just prior to its engagement at the Battle of Antietam, fought on September 17th, 1862. The 16th Maine did not take part in that encounter, but suffered heavily in the following months from sickness and ill health, brought on by a lack of proper clothing and shelter. Adin Thayer was one of many who fell ill and was therefore sent to a U.S. general hospital in Annapolis, MD where much of his correspondence was addressed from.

He rejoined the 16th Maine in time to take part in the battle of Fredericksburg, where he was wounded in the leg and sent again to recuperate in a general hospital. He recovered and fought in the Battle of Gettysburg where he was captured on July 1st, the first day of fighting. After a forced march to Staunton, Virginia where "...the rebels used us rather hard sometimes they would give us half a pint of flour and two pounds of meat for three days...", he was imprisoned at Belle Isle Prison in Richmond where he would remain for ten weeks till exchanged.

Thayer participated in the 1864 Overland Campaign until the siege of Petersburg and the August 18th, 1864 Battle of Weldon Railroad where he was captured for a second time, along with many of the men in his regiment. Sent to a Confederate prison camp, this time in Salisbury, North Carolina he died on the 23rd of January 1865 of chronic diarrhea. Sgt. William Fennelly who was with Thayer when he died later wrote to Adin's father that, "We did not belong to the same Co. but I was with him so much that I learned to think as much of him as I did of anyone in my own company."

Scope and Content Note

The Adin Thayer collection consists of 21 letters containing 41 pages total. Thayer's correspondence begins on March 25th, 1862 at Portsmouth Grove and continues till he penned his last letter on August 7th, 1864 from outside Petersburg, VA. The final letter in the collection is dated April 26th, 1865 and is addressed to Thayer's father from Sgt. William Fennelly, of the 16th Maine informing him of his son's demise in the Confederate prison camp at Salisbury, NC. All of the letters are addressed to members of Thayer's family in Waterville, ME. Thayer primarily writes to his father Phillip and sister Ellen although other letters are directed towards his younger brother and to his mother. Often Thayer will write to two separate individuals on the same piece of stationary, addressing his father on the front and his sister on the back.

Spanning the majority of the conflict, Thayer's letters were written from a variety of locations through out Maryland and Virginia. The bulk of his collected correspondence dates from the time of his convalescence in the U.S. general hospitals of Washington DC and Annapolis, MD.

Thayer's early correspondence is notable for its lack of war related material. Mostly he was concerned with the goings on of home and the progress of the spring planting on the farm. "I want you to write all about the crops and how and when you see my colt and how he grows so good." He seems to never have been satisfied with the amount of letters from his family, evidenced by his writing after a long period with no mail, "I shall begin [to] think that all you folks have forgotten all about me before a great while longer."

Thayer also commented on the movements of the armies and his experiences in the conflict, particularly in regard to the December 13th, 1863 battle of Fredericksburg and his first experience as a prisoner of war following the July, 1863 battle of Gettysburg.

Box List

Box 1

- 1-1 Correspondence: March 25, 1862 – September 13, 1862
 - March 25, 1862 - Portsmouth Grove: Dear Father
 - June 5, 1862 - Camp near White Oak Church: Dear Father; Dear Sister
 - September 13, 1862 - Ridgeville, MD: Dear Sister
 - September 13, 1862 - Ridgeville, MD: Dear Father

- 1-2 Correspondence: October 10, 1862 – December 22, 1862
 - October 10, 1862 - Encamped near Sharpsburg, MD: Dear Sister Ellen
 - October 22, 1862 - U.S. General Hospital: Dear Father
 - November 8, 1862 - General Hospital: Dear Father; Dear Brother
 - December 22, 1862 - Alexandria the Government Hospital: Dear Father

- 1-3 Correspondence: January 9, 1863 – March 16, 1863
- January 9, 1863 - Alexandria: Dear Father; Dear Sister; Dear Mother
 - January 20, 1862 - U.S. General Hospital, Portsmouth Grove: Dear Father: Dear Sister
 - March 16, 1863 - U.S. General Hospital, Portsmouth Grove: Dear Father; Dear Sister
- 1-4 Correspondence: October 1, 1863 – October 22, 1863
- October 1, 1863 - College Green Barracks, Annapolis, MD
 - October 13, 1863 - U.S. General Hospital, Annapolis, MD: Dear Father
 - October 22, 1863 - Dear Sister
- 1-5 Correspondence: February 23, 1864 – May 8, 1864
- February 23, 1864 - U.S. General Hospital, Annapolis, MD: Dear Sister
 - March 28, 1864 - U.S. General Hospital, Annapolis, MD: Dear Father
 - May 2, 1864 - Camp Parole, Annapolis, MD: Dear Sister
 - May 8, 1864 - Camp Parole, Annapolis, MD: Dear Father
- 1-6 Correspondence: July 11, 1864 – April 26, 1865
- July 11, 1864 - Camp Petersburg, VA: Dear Father
 - August 7, 1864 - Near Petersburg, VA: Dear Sister
 - April 26, 1865 - North East Harbor, ME: Sgt. William Fennelly, Co. H, 16th ME to Dear Sir
- 1-7 Correspondence, Envelopes & Photograph
- June 24, 1863 - Waterville, ME: C. R. McFadden to Phillip Thayer regarding \$88 money order; Photograph of Adin B. Thayer in uniform; taken post March 1864.
Envelopes from Correspondence (7)
- 1-8 Cloth and cardboard plaque reading “A. THAYER 16TH MAINE”
- 1-9 Photocopies of biographical and unit information

Contact Information

Special Collections and College Archives
Musselman Library, Gettysburg College
717-337-7014

special_collections@gettysburg.edu
www.gettysburg.edu/special-collections