

**Guide to the Michael Guinan Papers, 1862-1864  
Catalog Number MS073**

**The Library at The Mariners' Museum**

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## **DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY**

**Repository:** The Library at The Mariners' Museum

**Title:** Michael Guinan Papers, 1862-1864

**Catalog number:** MS073

**Accession number:** CA 106-117 (CK121)

**Physical Characteristics:** 17 items

**Language(s):** English

**Creator(s):** Michael Guinan

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

This collection features the correspondence of Michael Guinan to his sister, a friend, and an Aunt, from November 1862 through October 1864. There are no letters from 1863. The letters provide insight into life aboard a ship, the prejudices, and the movement of a Union private in wartime.

In his series of letters dating from November to December 1862, Guinan was stationed on board the USS *Arago* off of Newport News. Through his letters, he describes the Federal ironclad USS *Monitor*, the remains of the USS *Cumberland*, and the area around Fortress Monroe. He writes of shore leave at Fortress Monroe and presents a vivid description of the ruins of the city of Hampton, Virginia.

In his second series of letters, dating from 1864, Guinan writes of Independence Day activities in Louisiana, his visit to Washington, D.C., and the movements of his unit. Guinan recounts his participation in combat with Confederate forces in the Shenandoah Valley, the capture of the 8<sup>th</sup> South Carolina Infantry regiment, and the destruction of agricultural and commercial enterprises around Staunton, Virginia.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

### **Accession number**

CK121 (Changed to CA 106-117, 1994)

### **Accession date**

1987

### **Restrictions**

Collection is open to all researchers.

### **Publication Rights**

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### **Preferred Citation**

Michael Guinan Papers, 1862-1864: MS73

The Library at The Mariners' Museum, Newport News, Virginia

## **BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL SKETCH**

### **Michael Guinan**

Aside from the information presented in his letters, little is known of Michael Guinan.

### **128<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer Regiment**

The 128th New York Volunteer Regiment was mustered in September 1862 under the command of Col. David S. Cowles. The regiment left New York September 5, 1862 and was attached to the defenses of Washington D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland until November 1862, when the regiment boarded the USS *Arago*, and headed south towards New Orleans. The regiment learned they would be attached to the Department of the Gulf under the command of General Nathaniel Banks, with the goal of opening the Mississippi River to the Federal forces. On the way to New Orleans, the *Arago*, waited at Fortress Monroe for the rest of the Federal fleet to assemble. While in Hampton Roads, the regiment viewed the wrecks of the USS *Cumberland* and the USS *Congress*. They saw the USS *Monitor* and the ruins of the town of Hampton.

In 1864 the regiment participated in the Shenandoah Valley campaign under General Philip Sheridan. They fought first at the Battle of the Opequon on Sept 19, 1864 and at Fisher's Hill on Sept 22, 1864. They then began burning crops, barns and mills up and down the Valley. They fought in the Battle of Cedar Creek and the majority of men from the 128th were caught by Confederate forces and taken prisoner. After capture these prisoners were transferred to Libby Prison at Richmond, Virginia. The regiment was honorably discharged and mustered out, under Captain Thomas N. Davis on July 12, 1865, at Savannah, Georgia.

### **SERIES DESCRIPTION**

The Michael Guinan Papers are arranged in a single series in ascending chronological order.

**Series I: Correspondence.** Comprised of eight letters from Michael Guinan to his sister, two letters to a friend, and one letter to his Aunt Bridget while a private in the 128<sup>th</sup> New York volunteers. He wrote from aboard the USS *Arago*, as well as from Newport News, Louisiana, Washington D.C., and western Virginia. This series is housed in 13 folder files and is arranged chronologically.

## BOX/FOLDER LISTING

### BOX 1: CORRESPONDENCE

**Folder 1      Finding Aid**

**Folder 2      November 1862, Correspondence**

**November 7, 1862.** USS *Arago*

Three-page letter addressed to Eliza Guinan. Guinan writes of the boarding of his unit on the *Arago*; that the ship will sail for Fortress Monroe and wait for the rest of the fleet; and that their final destination is to be Charleston. He describes living conditions on board the ship.

[MS73.01.02.01]

**November 13, 1862.** USS *Arago* off Newport News.

Four-page letter addressed to Eliza Guinan. Guinan describes the USS *Monitor* as a “raft with a cheesebox on it”; describes the sunken *Cumberland*; and the area around Fort Monroe. He compares the weather in Hampton Roads with New York and states that there are several ironclad vessels stationed in the Roads. [MS73.01.03.01]

**Folder 3      November 1862, Correspondence**

**November 24, 1862.**

Two-page letter addressed to Elizabeth Harlowe, a friend. Guinan asks Harlowe for her likeness and mentions death of a doctor in his regiment.

[MS073.01.03.01]

**Folder 4      November 1862, Correspondence**

**November 24, 1862.** USS *Arago* /Fort Monroe.

Six-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan mentions the death of doctor Van Vleck. He writes of the weather; his pay; describes Newport News; seeing the house “where the rebel General Lee was quartered”; the visit of Abraham Miller on board the *Arago*; and the way the watch is conducted. [MS073.01.04.01]

**Folder 5      November 1862, Correspondence**

**November 29, 1862.** USS *Arago* /Fort Monroe.

Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan states that his unit will be going ashore and stay in Fortress Monroe. After weeks on board the *Arago*, Guinan thinks a week or two ashore will help the men avoid sickness. [MS073.01.05.01]

**Folder 6      November 1862, Correspondence**

**November 30, 1862.** Fort Monroe.

Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan states that his unit is encamped in Hampton and describes the area as having some buildings remaining including a church and a graveyard. He writes with humor over forgetting to include wood from General Robert E. Lee's bed in his letter, his short hair, what they eat, and the doctor's ministrations.

[MS073.01.06.01]

**Folder 7      December 1862, Correspondence**

**December 3, 1862.** Fort Monroe.

Three-page letter from Michael Guinan to Elizabeth Harlowe, a friend. Guinan gives a brief review of his daily activities; relates going ashore the week before; and states that he does not know where they will be sent.

[MS073.01.07.01]

**Folder 8      July 1864, Correspondence**

**July 28, 1864.** Algiers, LA, posted in Washington, D.C.

Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan describes Independence Day activities. (Includes envelope) [MS073.01.08.01]

**Folder 9      July 1864, Correspondence**

**July 30, 1864.** Washington, D.C.

Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan writes about his visit to Washington D.C. In an addendum, written August 3<sup>rd</sup>, Guinan states that his unit is on the march about three miles from Frederick, Maryland. (Includes envelope) [MS073.01.09.01]

**Folder 10     August 1864, Correspondence**

**August 27, 1864.** Halltown, VA.

Three-page letter from Michael Guinan to Aunt Bridget. Guinan writes that he participated in heavy fighting, against Confederate forces, in the Shenandoah Valley under General Philip Sheridan. [MS073.01.10.01]

**Folder 11     September 1864, Correspondence**

**September 14, 1864.** Berryville, VA.

Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan writes of the capture of the 8<sup>th</sup> South Carolina regiment by the cavalry and the fight near Bunker Hill. (Includes envelope) [MS073.01.11.01]

**Folder 12      October 1864, Correspondence**

**October 4, 1864.** Harrisonburg, VA. Posted in Martinsburg, WV. Three-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan writes that the cavalry destroyed the crops, mills, and tanneries; tore up the railroad track around Staunton; and gave the rebels “a thrashing” at Winchester and Fisher’s Hill. He speculates about returning to Louisiana. (Includes envelope) [MS073.01.12.01]

**Folder 13      Envelopes.**

**[1862-1864]**

This patriotic envelope has an image of the United States flag, the Constitution, and grasping hands. The envelope is addressed to Miss Eliza Grinan of Hudson, Col. Co., New York. The postmark has been removed. [MS073.01.13.01]

**[1862-1864]**

This plain envelope is addressed to Miss Eliza Guinan of Hudson, Col. Co., New York. The postmark has been removed. [MS073.01.13.02]

**MATERIALS REMOVED**

None

**SOURCES CONSULTED**

*New York in the War of the Rebellion*, 3rd ed. Frederick Phisterer. Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912. Found at this website:

<http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/reghist/civil/infantry/128thInf/128thInfMain.htm>  
[home.rochester.rr.com/ny128th/](http://home.rochester.rr.com/ny128th/)

**SUBJECTS**

128<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry Regiment (Volunteer)

*Arago* (Schooner ; 1861)

Guinan, Michael

*Monitor* (Ironclad ; 1862)

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