

**Guide to the Jacob Nicklis Papers, 1862
Catalog Number MS363**

The Library at The Mariners' Museum

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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository: The Library at The Mariners' Museum

Title: Jacob Nicklis Papers, 1862

Catalog number: MS363

Accession number: A2006.15

Physical Characteristics: 9 items

Language(s): English

Creator(s): Jacob Nicklis

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection is comprised of six letters from Jacob Nicklis to his father William Nicklis dating from October 27th and December 28th, 1862. Through his letters, Nicklis describes the series of events that led to his service on board the USS *Monitor*. Nicklis details his first views of the ship in the Washington Navy Yard, volunteering as part of her crew, and life on board the *Monitor*. He presents, in detail, the manning and firing of *Monitor's* guns. Throughout his letters, Nicklis expresses his misgiving on serving on board the *Monitor*. He states that the turret is “getting weak” and that “they say we will have a pretty rough time a going around Hatteras but I hope it will not be the case.”

Jacob Nicklis did not survive the sinking of the *Monitor*. In his letter to Nicklis's sister, Antoinette, Grenville Weeks, surgeon on the *Monitor*, gives his condolences on the loss of her brother, Jacob. Weeks writes that Nicklis went down with the *Monitor* and states that her brother “did his duty well, and has I believe gone to a brighter world, where storms do not come.” The final two letters are from Nicklis's two sisters Nettie and Eva and date after the Civil War. The Nicklis letters were acquired by the museum through the generosity of the Bronze Door Society at The Mariners' Museum.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Accession number

A2006.15

Accession date

2006

Restrictions

Collection is open to all researchers.

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Preferred Citation

Jacob Nicklis Papers, 1862: MS363

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

Note to Users

Due to the fragile and rare nature of the collection, researchers are requested to handle the materials with caution and in accordance with proscribed archival practices. When using these materials, please preserve the original order of the collection.

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL SKETCH

The son of a German immigrant, William Nicklis, Sr., Jacob had two brothers and four sisters. His father and eldest brother ran a tailor shop on Main Street in Buffalo, New York. Aside from those facts, little is known of Nicklis' early life. He joined the United States Navy at the age of 16. Jacob Nicklis was 21 years of age when he stepped on board the USS *Monitor* at the Washington Naval Yard in November 1862, having reenlisted in the United States Navy a month earlier. According to Nicklis' reenlistment records, he stood 5 feet 7 ½ inches tall, had grey eyes, light hair, and a ruddy complexion. Jacob Nicklis perished with 15 fellow crewmen, when the *Monitor* sank on December 31, 1862.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

The papers are in a single series of correspondence and arranged in ascending chronological order.

Series I: Correspondence, 1862.

Arranged chronologically, this series is comprised of six letters from Jacob Nicklis, to his father dating from October to December 1862. Also in the collection is a letter from *Monitor* surgeon Grenville Weeks to Nicklis' sister Antoinette dating from January 1863, and two letters from Nicklis family members dating after the Civil War.

FOLDER LISTING

Folder 1 **Finding Aid/Background Information**

Folder 2 **Correspondence, October 1862**

October 7, 1862: Jersey City.

Four-page letter from Jacob Nicklis to his father William Nicklis, Sr. Nicklis describes trip from Buffalo to Jersey City; the receiving ship *North Carolina*; food and rations of the crew, and the issuance of passes. He states that many of his friends are aboard the receiving ship. He writes of his visit to New York City and the purchase of clothing.

[MS363.01.02.01]

Folder 3 Correspondence, November 1862

November 3, 1862: Washington Naval Yard.

Eight-page letter from Jacob Nicklis to his father William Nicklis, Sr. Nicklis describes his journey to the Washington Navy Yard. Once at the Yard, Nicklis viewed the USS *Monitor*. He states that the *Monitor* lies in the Yard for repairs and that some of her crew had deserted claiming that the boat was not seaworthy. However, he feels that there will be no danger as she has been “altered” so that there “will be no danger.” Nicklis states his desire to remain with the “rest of the boys from Buffalo” when assigned to a ship. He writes that Mrs. Lincoln, General Scott, General Banks, and other prominent officers were on board the North Carolina the previous week. [MS363.01.03.01]

Folder 4 Correspondence, November 1862

November 16, 1862: U.S. Steamer *Monitor*, Off Newport News.

Four-page letter from Jacob Nicklis to his father William Nicklis, Sr. Nicklis writes that he and his friend Isaac Scott (from Buffalo) volunteered for the *Monitor*. He states that he did not wish to volunteer to serve on the *Monitor*, however, the “rest of the boys from our place did so I joined with them.” He writes that he does not like the accommodations on board *Monitor*. According to Nicklis, he has been painting the *Monitor* for the last three days. His position on board is the number one gun as “first shot man” and in the captain’s boat he is one of the oarsmen. [MS363.01.04.01]

Folder 5 Correspondence, November 1862

November 17, 1862: U.S. Steamer *Monitor*, Off Newport News.

Four-page letter from Jacob Nicklis to his father William Nicklis, Sr. Nicklis requests, through a detailed listing, that his father to send him clothing and supplies. He writes that some of the officers and men harvested oysters and asks if the draft in Buffalo, New York has ended. [MS363.01.05.01]

Folder 6 Correspondence, December 1862

December 27, 1862: U.S. Steamer *Monitor*.

Four-page letter from Jacob Nicklis to his father William Nicklis, Sr. Nicklis writes that the *Monitor* still lies off of Newport News, and that the ship is expected to leave any day. He requests that his father not send his Christmas box. According to Nicklis, he visited Newport News and Fortress Monroe, the prior week, and describes some of the troops from Buffalo, New York, encamped there. Nicklis describes, in detail, the manning and firing of *Monitor*’s guns. He also states that the turret is

“getting weak” and that the *Monitor* may have to return to the Washington Navy Yard for repairs. [MS363.01.06.01]

Folder 7 Correspondence, December 1862

December 28, 1862: U.S. Steamer *Monitor*.

Four-page letter from Jacob Nicklis to his father William Nicklis, Sr. Nicklis writes that the *Passaic* has arrived; that once the *Montauk* and *Connecticut* arrive *Monitor* will proceed to Charleston; and that the *Montauk* and *Connecticut* have reached Philadelphia and departed on Friday. Nicklis gives a detailed account of Christmas dinner on board *Monitor*. He requests that his father not respond to this letter until he hears from him again. “They say we will have a pretty rough time a going around Hatteras but I hope it will not be the case.” This is the last letter from Jacob Nicklis. [MS363.01.07.01]

Folder 8 Correspondence, January 1863

December 28, 1862: New York.

One-page letter from Grenville M. Weeks to Antoinette Nicklis. Weeks, surgeon on board *Monitor*, gives Antoinette Nicklis his condolences on the loss of her brother, Jacob. Weeks writes that Nicklis went down with the *Monitor*. [MS363.01.08.01]

Folder 9 Correspondence, 1868

September 19, 1868: Bergen.

Three-page letter from Eva to Nellie (sisters of Jacob Nicklis).

Folder 10 Correspondence, 1880

July 22, 1880.

Four-page letter, unsigned.

MATERIALS REMOVED

None

SOURCES CONSULTED

None

SUBJECTS

Nicklis, Jacob

Monitor (Ironclad ; 1862)

[United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Personal narratives.](#)

Weeks, Grenville