

**Guide to the William Monegan Letters, 1861-1885
MS0014**

**The Mariners' Museum Library
at
Christopher Newport University**

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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository: The Mariners' Museum Library

Title: William Monegan Letters

Inclusive Dates: 1861-1885

Bulk Dates: 1861-1862

Catalog number: MS0014

Physical Characteristics: 48 items of correspondence and envelopes

Language: English

Creator: Monegan, William Lee

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

According to military records, William Lee Monegan volunteered on April 26, 1861, in Company C of the 10th Regiment of the New York State (Volunteers). He enrolled in New York City to serve two years and was appointed Second Lieutenant. He mustered in as First Lieutenant on April 30th 1861. The regiment was sent to Virginia in late May 1861, and Monegan's company arrived on the steamer *State of Georgia* on or about June 7, 1861. Headquarters for the regiment were established at Camp Hamilton, near Fortress Monroe. However, Monegan, in his correspondence, states that the regiment spent a large portion between June 1861 and February 1862 within the walls of Fortress Monroe. While encamped at Fortress Monroe, Monegan witnessed the battle between the US Steam Battery *Monitor* and the Confederate iron clad CSS *Virginia*.

In May 1862, the regiment moved to Norfolk and then Portsmouth. On June 7, 1862, the regiment was attached to the 3d brigade, 2nd division, 5th corps, which it joined at Bottom's bridge on the Chickahominy River. The regiment was active in the Seven Days' Battles and was encamped at Harrison's Landing. In August, the regiment returned to Newport News. While encamped at Harrison's Landing, the records show that Monegan resigned his commission on July 12, 1862. Little to nothing is known of Monegan's life before or after the Civil War. His parents and brother Joseph lived in Williamsburgh, New York.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection features the Civil War correspondence of William Lee Monegan to his brother Joseph (Joe) Monegan from June 1861 to July 1862 and contains several letters from friends and acquaintances. Monegan wrote the majority of the letters in this collection while serving with the 10th New York Infantry (Volunteer) at Fort Monroe, participating in the Peninsula Campaign.

Starting with his journey from New York, Monegan's letters describe the first year of the U.S. Civil War in the Hampton Roads area. Of particular interest are Monegan's account of the battle between the Federal ironclad USS *Monitor* and the Confederate ironclad CSS *Virginia* on March 9, 1862. He also describes such events as the burning of Hampton, the capture of Yorktown by Federal forces, the battle for Norfolk, and the

Federal attempt to capture Richmond. The letters end before Monegan resigned his commission in the fall of 1862.

The letters are organized into 20 folders and arranged chronologically.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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2001

Restrictions

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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 prescribed archival practices. When using these materials, please preserve the original order of the collection.

RELATED MATERIALS

Transcriptions in Microsoft Word format of many of the letters in the collection are available for consultation in the Library. Transcripts may be converted to portable document files at patron request.

FILE GUIDE

BOX 1

Folder 1 Finding Aid/Background Information

Folder 2 Correspondence, June 1861

June 7, 1861: Steamship *State of Georgia*, off Fort Monroe, VA.

Two-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan describes the journey from New York to Hampton Roads; the Confederate encampment at Sewell's Point; and African-American servants on board the steamship *State of Georgia*. [MS14.01.02.01]

Folder 3 Correspondence, July 1861

July 11, 1861: New York City, NY.

One-page letter and envelope addressed to William Monegan from P.D. Kelly. Kelly requests a meeting with Monegan. [MS14.01.03.01]

July 25, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Two-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan describes preparations by General Benjamin Butler for the impending battle at Big Bethel. He writes of the anticipation of Confederate attacks on Federal outposts in Hampton after the battle of Bull Run. [MS14.01.03.02]

July 30, 1861: Fort Scheiber.

One-page letter and envelope addressed to Joe Monegan from Thomas Atkins. Atkins describes military training, lack of uniforms and weapons, “bad” officers, and military food. [MS14.01.03.03]

Folder 4

Correspondence, August 1861

August 8, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter and envelope addressed to his nephew John. Monegan describes weather conditions; the burning of Hampton, Virginia; and the advance of Confederate forces from Yorktown to Fox Hill. [MS14.01.04.01]

August 9, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of a large “Union gun” mounted on the beach and aimed at Sewell’s Point; states that the town of Hampton is in ruins; complains about the lack of pay; and describes the removal of the company captain from command. [MS14.01.04.02]

August 19, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Two-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of his promotion to 1st Lieutenant; the arrival of General John E. Wool; states that he has been paid; and speaks of the cost of food. [MS14.01.04.03]

August 19, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

One-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Hand delivered letter by courier with \$120.00 to pay bills. [MS14.01.04.04]

August 26, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

One-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes to thank his brother for the shirts and other items he sent. [MS14.01.04.05]

Folder 5

Correspondence, September 1861

September 5, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Two-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of his financial problems; the release of his African-American servant to save money; and the need for new uniforms. [MS14.01.05.01]

September 8, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan gives a detailed description of the mounting of the guard at Fortress Monroe and relates that he has been ill and that he will not be able to go home on recruiting service. [MS14.01.05.02]

September 9, 1861: New York, NY.

One-page pre-letter addressed to William Monegan from Metropolitan Lodge No.273, F.A.M. Notice of meeting on September 12, 1861. [MS14.01.05.03]

Folder 6

Correspondence, October 1861

October 11, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Five-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan relates a rumor that the Confederate steamers *Yorktown* and *Merrimack* are attempting to run the Federal blockade. He also writes about the battle near “Hatteras Inlet” of the Federal gunboat *Monticello* and confederate forces. He discusses his personal financial problems; the release his African-American servant to save money; and the need for new uniforms. [MS14.01.06.01]

Folder 7

Correspondence, October 1861

October 21, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Six-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan informs his brother of a skirmish near Newport News and gives the number and types of ships in Hampton Roads. [MS14.01.07.01]

October 27, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of a Federal expedition of troops and ships forming off Fort Monroe; names some of the ships in the expedition; and describes a skirmish near Newport News. [MS14.01.07.02]

Folder 8

Correspondence, November 1861

November 1, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Four-page letter an envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan requests his brother to send stationary supplies for resale. He writes of an expedition leaving the fort with more than 75 ships carrying 16,000 troops, but does not know of their final destination. [MS14.01.08.01]

November 3, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Four-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan requests his brother to send additional stationary supplies for resale; writes of the death of Colonel Elder; gives more detail of an expedition to attack Charleston; and talks about the resignation of General Winfield Scott. [MS14.01.08.02]

November 10, 1861: 9th Regiment Camp, Darnestown, MD.
Three-page letter from William C. Marion addressed to William Monegan. Marion writes of his frustration at not receiving a commission and tells of his desire to leave the regiment. [MS14.01.08.03]

Folder 9

Correspondence, November 1861

November 12, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Six-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of a large fire in the vicinity of Norfolk; a large force of Confederate troops at Big Bethel; and complains about not receiving a promotion to captain. [MS14.01.09.01]

November 27, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Two-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan discusses personal finances. [MS14.01.09.02]

Folder 10

Correspondence, December 1861

December 14, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of events within the regiment and of a rumor that Charleston had been reduced to ashes. [MS14.01.10.01]

December 15, 1861: Fortress Monroe, VA.

One-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan requests his brother to send additional stationary supplies for resale. [MS14.01.10.02]

Folder 11

Correspondence, January 1862

January 12, 1862: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan gives his brother a detailed description of General Ambrose Burnside's. [MS14.01.11.01]

January 18, 1862: Fortress Monroe, VA.

Two-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan discusses his personal financial issues. [MS14.01.11.02]

January 19, 1862: Camp California (Alexandria), VA.

Three-page letter and envelope addressed to Joe Monaghan from Colonel R.C. Enright. Colonel Enright describes his testimony before the U.S. Senate in opposition to the confirmation of Thomas F. Meagher as Brigadier General. [MS14.01.11.03]

January 22, 1862: Fort Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan describes rumors of a possible land and sea attack on the Confederate positions in Norfolk by General Ambrose Burnside. [MS14.01.11.04]

January 31, 1862: Fort Monroe, VA.

One-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan informs his brother that he is sending him a sword cane received from a “contraband” that escaped from Norfolk. [MS14.01.11.05]

Folder 12 Correspondence, February 1862

February 8, 1862: Fort Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes that his regiment will be sent to either Camp Hamilton or Hampton, Virginia. [MS14.01.12.01]

Folder 13 Correspondence, March 1862

March 10, 1862: Fort Monroe, VA.

Four-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes a very detailed account of the Battle of Hampton Roads. He describes the destruction of the USS *Cumberland* and USS *Congress* by the CSS *Virginia*; the grounding of the USS *Minnesota*; the battle between the CSS *Virginia* and the USS *Monitor*; the “retreat” of the CSS *Virginia*; and the death toll on the U.S. Navy ships. [MS14.01.13.01]

March 20, 1862: Fort Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes that the *Merrimack* (CSS *Virginia*) has not been seen since the Battle of Hampton Roads, although he expects the *Virginia* to return at any time. He gives a description of the USS *Monitor* and notes the arrival of many New York steamboats filled with over 15,000 troops. [MS14.01.13.02]

March 30, 1862: Fort Monroe, VA.

Two-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes that 80,000 men will move toward Richmond and the rest toward Norfolk; that part of the army is already on the move; and that Federal forces at Fort Monroe expect the *Merrimack* (CSS *Virginia*) to return shortly. [MS14.01.13.03]

Folder 14 Correspondence, April 1862

April 17, 1862: Fort Monroe, VA.

One-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes that Federal troops are nervous over the possible return of the *Merrimack* (CSS *Virginia*). [MS14.01.14.01]

April 29, 1862: Fort Monroe, VA.

Three-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes that he has been assigned to Camp Hamilton; states that they expect the *Merrimack* (CSS Virginia) to return any day; and that the gunboat USS *Galena* is now stationed alongside the USS *Monitor*. [MS14.01.14.02]

Folder 15

Correspondence, May 1862

May 3, 1862: Camp Hamilton, VA.

Three-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of the siege and fall of Yorktown to Federal forces and describes camp life. [MS14.01.15.01]

May 7, 1862: Camp Hamilton, VA.

Seven-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan describes in detail the camp and its location. He writes of General John E. Wool's behavior; states that he saw President Abraham Lincoln; and gives a detailed description of the president. He talks of the pillaging of Hampton and receiving orders to go to Norfolk. [MS14.01.15.02]

May 8, 1862: Army of Potomac, Near Richmond, VA

One-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes that his company is encamped near General George McClellan and gives a description of the camp. [MS14.01.15.03]

May 12, 1862: Fort Norfolk, VA.

Two-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of the battle and capture of Norfolk, Virginia and states that the *Merrimack* (CSS Virginia) has been destroyed. [MS14.01.15.04]

May 16, 1862: Pinnars Point Battery, Opposite Fort Norfolk, VA

Four-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes that his unit is on the march; tells of the battle for Norfolk; and describes his unit's roll in the battle for Norfolk. [MS14.01.15.05]

May 29, 1862: Camp Viele, Portsmouth, VA.

Four-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. He describes the camp and states that they are encamped near the Suffolk and Portsmouth Railroad. Monegan writes that he believes Confederate forces will soon attempt to push north into Maryland and Pennsylvania while maintaining a force near Richmond to distract General George McClellan. He describes the scope of destruction at the Gosport Navy Yard. [MS14.01.15.06]

Folder 16

Correspondence, June 1862

June 3, 1862: Camp Viele, Portsmouth, VA.

Two-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes that General John A. Dix has replaced General John E. Wool; his unit is on the march; and his unit was transferred to the Army of the Potomac. [MS14.01.16.01]

June 3, 1862: Norfolk, VA.

Adams Express Company receipt for \$150.00. This receipt was enclosed with the letter from Monegan to his brother Joe, dated June 3, 1862. [MS14.01.16.02]

Folder 17

Correspondence, June 1862

June 5, 1862: White House, VA.

One-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan gives instructions to his brother concerning the disposition of his possessions and body in the event of his death. [MS14.01.17.01]

June 17, 1862: Camp before Richmond, VA.

Four-page letter and envelope addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of the conditions on the forced march toward Richmond; conditions in camp; and that he is considering resigning his commission. [MS14.01.17.02]

Folder 18

Correspondence, June 1862

June 20, 1862: Camp near Richmond, VA.

Three-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes about rumors of General Ambrose Burnside's siege of Darlington, Virginia; general conditions in camp; resigning his commission once Richmond is taken; and states that a number of officers in the regiment will also resign. [MS14.01.18.01]

June 24, 1862: Camp near Richmond, VA.

Three-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan describes conditions within the camp; complains of wearing the same set of clothing for the last three weeks; and states that his health is poor. [MS14.01.18.02]

June 28, 1862: Camp Lincoln near McClellan's Headquarters.

Two-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan writes of being surrounded by Confederate forces; states that his unit has battled Confederate forces; states that his unit has captured a Confederate flag; and that after the battle a number of the men of the Monegan's unit are missing. [MS14.01.18.03]

Folder 19

Correspondence, July 1862

July 1, 1862: Near James River, VA.

One-page letter addressed to his brother Joe. Monegan states that he and his unit participated in five day battle with Confederate forces; writes that

Confederate forces have fled; and describes the scene of battle.
[MS14.01.19.01]

July 5, 1862: Fairfield, CT.

One-page letter and envelope addressed to Joe Monegan from Emily C. Knapp. Miss Knapp writes to enquire if Joe Monegan has heard from his brother William. [MS14.01.19.02]

Folder 20 Correspondence, 1885
December 5, 1885: New York, NY.
Two-page letter from Edward Todd & Co. to Miss K.C. Monegan.
[MS14.01.20.01]

Folder 21 Unpaired envelopes
Five envelopes that cannot be paired with letters from the collection.

SOURCES CONSULTED

None

SUBJECTS

United States. Army. New York Infantry Regiment, 10th (1861-1865)

Monitor (Ironclad : 1862)

Virginia (Ironclad : 1862)

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

Peninsular Campaign, 1862

United States-History-Civil War, 1861-1865-Naval operations