Guide to the Michael Guinan Letters, 1862, 1864
MS0073

The Mariners’ Museum Library
at
Christopher Newport University

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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository: The Mariners’ Museum Library
Title: Michael Guinan Letters
Inclusive Dates: 1862, 1864
Catalog number: MS0073
Former Catalog number: CA 106-117
Physical Characteristics: 17 items of correspondence and envelopes
Languages: English
Creator: Guinan, Michael

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
Michael Guinan was a member of Company A, 128th Regiment, New York Volunteers during the Civil War. All that is known of Guinan comes from his letters. He spent November and December of 1862 stationed on board the USS Arago off Newport News, VA. He was then stationed early in 1863 at Camp Parapet outside New Orleans. He participated in the occupation of Louisiana, the siege of Port Hudson, and the retreat from the Red River expedition. Relatives of Guinan lived in New Orleans and supported and fought for the Confederate States of America. Guinan then moved north with his regiment and visited Washington, DC in July, 1864. He then deployed to Fredericksburg, VA and participated in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864, serving under General Phil Sheridan.

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, while Guinan was posted in New Orleans. The single letter in the collection that was written in Louisiana was posted from Washington, DC. 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 US Steam Battery 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 8th South Carolina Infantry regiment, and the destruction of agricultural and commercial enterprises around Staunton, Virginia.

The Michael Guinan Letters are organized into 13 folders in ascending chronological order.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION
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1987

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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
A collection of 64 letters by Michael Guinan is held by The Historic New Orleans Collection. These letters are identified as the Michael Guinan Letters, MSS 289, Williams Research Center, The Historic New Orleans Collection. They date from 1862 to 1864, the period of Guinan’s service in Louisiana. An on-line finding aid is available by searching the collections catalog at http://www.hnoc.org/.

FILE GUIDE

BOX 1  CORRESPONDENCE
Folder 1  Finding Aid
Folder 2  November 1862, Correspondence
Folder 3  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 4  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 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 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 30, 1862. Fort Monroe.
Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan states that his unit is in 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 ministries. [MS073.01.06.01]

Folder 7
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 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 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 3rd, Guinan states that his unit is on the march about three miles from Frederick, Maryland. (Includes envelope) [MS073.01.09.01]

Folder 10
August 27, 1864. Haltown, 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 8th 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]

SOURCES CONSULTED  
home.rochester.rr.com/ny128th/

SUBJECTS  
United States. Army. New York Infantry Regiment, 128th (1862-1865)  
Arago (Schooner : 1861)  
Monitor (Ironclad : 1862)  
Shenandoah Valley Campaign, 1864 (August-November)  
United States-History-Civil War, 1861-1865-Personal narratives  
Virginia-History-Civil War, 1861-1865