

Collection #
SC 2681

AMELIA CANNON LETTERS, 1861–CIRCA 1873

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Processed by

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29 March 2002

Updated 9 March 2004

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 7 folders, 2 artifacts

COLLECTION
DATES: 1861-circa 1873

PROVENANCE: Connie Owen Grossman, 4225 North 21st St. #11, Phoenix, AZ
85016, 17 April 2000

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: None

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2000.0480

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Permilia (Amelia) M. Cannon (1847-1919) was born near South Milford, La Grange County, Indiana, to farmers William H. and Julian Cannon. Her siblings were Socrates (b. circa 1839) and William (b. circa 1855). After the Civil War she married Morten or Henry Shipe and moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado. She is listed on the 1860 Indiana Census as "Permilia M. Cannon," but letters in this collection indicate that she was most often addressed as "Amelia" by her friends.

Alfred Shields was born in Lincolnshire, England, circa 1841. His parents were Richard and Harriet (nee Brooks) Shields. According to the 1860 Indiana Census, the family lived in Steuben County. Harriet was the head of the household at this time. Alfred's siblings were Ruth, Maria, Caroline, Jesse, and Alzina. Shields enlisted in the 44th Indiana Infantry Regiment, Company G., on 22 November 1861. He died at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on 5 December 1863.

John G. Burwell of Noble County, Indiana, enlisted as a corporal in the 44th Indiana Infantry Regiment, Company G, on 22 November 1861. He re-enlisted on 1 January 1864, and mustered out as a sergeant on 14 September 1865.

Hattie (Harriet) Oiler (b. circa 1848) was born in Pennsylvania, and lived in Noble County, Indiana, in 1860. Her parents were James and Rosana Oiler. Her siblings were Elizabeth, Winifred, William, Mary, Anna, Sarah, and Susan. The family returned to Pennsylvania circa 1863.

Sources:

Material in the collection.

Telephone conversation with Connie Owen Grossman, 28 Feb. 2002

American Civil War Research Database (www.civilwardata.com)

Census of Indiana, 1860

Morley, Harvey W. *1955 History of Steuben County*. Angola, Indiana, 1956. F532 .S8N5 1956

History of Steuben County, Indiana. Chicago: Interstate Publishing Company, 1885. F532.S8H6 1885

National Index to the 1880 Census

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection includes five letters written to Amelia Cannon of La Grange County, Indiana. Three letters were written by Civil War soldier Alfred Shields of the 44th Indiana Infantry Regiment (Company G), between 7 December 1861 and 11 December 1862. Cannon's friend Hattie (Harriet) Oiler of Kersville, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, wrote two letters in the collection. Envelopes exist for most of the letters.

Correspondence written by Amelia includes letters to an individual named “Jake,” (7 May 1865), and to “Henry” (30 November 1873). Other correspondence consists of a letter, possibly written by Amelia’s daughter Ida, and three fragments of letters, written in 1863 and 1864. Other material includes three sketches of landscapes (possibly drawn by Alfred Shields), poetry, two locks of hair, and ephemera. One lock of hair is attached to a pin or broach, which is sewn to a fragment of a letter.

Letters from Alfred Shields to Amelia Cannon are stored in folders 1 and 2. In the letter dated 7 December 1861 Shields states that he is not very well at this time, and has been in hospital for three weeks with “lung fever.” He chides Amelia for not thinking better of “John.” He may be referring John G. Burwell, a corporal in the 44th Indiana Infantry Regiment.

The second letter, dated 7 January 1862, includes an envelope postmarked Henderson, Kentucky. Shields addressed this letter to “Miss Amelia Cannon.” The letter describes an incident in which “John” purloined, read, and answered a letter that Amelia had written to Alfred. Alfred requests that she send her letters care of “Captain Williams.”

The final letter from Alfred Shields to Amelia Cannon is dated 11 December 1862. It was written from “Camp, five miles from Nashville, Tennessee.” The letter mentions that “John Burwell” is in hospital with a broken leg. Shields states that there is a “large force of rebels” at Murfreesboro, Tennessee and that he expects there will be a “big fight.” He describes the rebels as “purty raged [with] there shoes awl worn out [sic].” A sketch enclosed in this letter is titled “Shuger [sic] Creek Botom [sic] at Ohio State. Shields may have written the poem “Not Forgetten” on the verso of the sketch. A second sketch in folder 2 shows the “vew [sic] from the east of the Black Laik [sic] and the mountains in the vicinity.” These sketches may depict topography near troop encampments.

A third, unidentified sketch is stored in folder 3. The sketch was originally enclosed in an envelope addressed to “Miss Amelia A. Cannon, South Milford, Lagrange Co., Indiana.” There is no postmark on the envelope. A lock of hair wrapped in white lace was also enclosed in the envelope.

Letters from Hattie (Harriet) Oiler to Amelia Cannon (folder 4) are dated 30 April 1863 and 1 May 1865. Hattie does not sign the 1863 letter, but the handwriting strongly resembles the penmanship in the 1865 letter, which is signed. Both letters are postmarked Kersville, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

Hattie refers to Amelia as “Sister Milla.” In the 1863 letter she discusses her personal dislike of cats, and dogs “if they don’t behave them selves [sic].” Hattie describes at length the practical jokes she has played on people over time, such as putting “Bumbles” in the bed of Mr. Logan’s hired man.

Hattie Oiler’s letter of 1 May, circa 1865 describes an evening in which she sang, possibly with a choir, at a local individual’s home. She states that “they had the sealing [sic] of the house all decorated with black crepe mourning for old Abe and the side walls with spruce pine and flags. . . .” Hattie also discusses leaving the musical event and going to “the hotel” and later the “squeezing patch.” She did not get home “til most day light [sic].”

Other material in folder 4 consists of an envelope addressed to “Miss Milla M. Cannon, South Milford, La Grange Co., Indiana,” a lace Valentine, and ephemera.

Folder 5 contains a letter dated 7 May 1865, from Amelia to “Jake.” This letter is lavishly decorated with designs in colored ink. Amelia discusses family illnesses, and confesses that she “actual [sic] had the blues” before his letter arrived. She describes going out to the woods where she has a writing desk to “write and listen to the sweet warblings of the merry birds for it is my soul’s delight.” She confesses that she wishes she were a bird so that she could “drift like the happy sunlight into the hearts of suffering men and make them to rejoice again.” Amelia closes the letter demanding that Jake send poetry, even if “you should have to copy it out of an ancient almanac.”

A letter and poem to “Henry,” possibly Henry Shipe, are stored in Folder 6. The letter, dated 30 November 1873, is postmarked Newburgh, Ohio. Amelia describes a train journey in which she is left in a car with a “drunken rowdie set of men” who were doing “everything but which was genteel.” Amelia is on her way to Akron, Ohio, and the tone and sentiments in the letter suggest that “Henry” was her husband. She mentions that “Ida” felt ill and Bobie was

frightened by the rocking movement of the train. The letter is written in purple ink, as is an accompanying poem. "Henry" is addressed in the poem, which is signed "Milla."

Folder 7 contains an undated letter from "Emily" to "Ida." The letter refers to the birth of Ida's "little brother," and the handwriting suggests that Emily and Ida were children. "Ida" may be the child referred to in the letter dated 30 November 1873 (folder 6). The folder also contains fragments of letters. The earliest fragment, dated 10 December 1863, refers to Amelia as "the huzzer girl." Amelia may have written the other fragment, dated from South Milford, La Grange County, 22 May 1864. The writer describes sitting beside a stream and hearing the "girgling [sic] of clear water." Other material in folder 7 consists of sketch, possibly made by a child, depicting colored flowers in a basket.

Three envelopes in the collection are annotated as follows: Soldier Letter, Antonio Abeytier, 1st Lt., 1st. Cav. N. M. Vols." The annotation may refer to a soldier serving in the New Mexico Volunteers during the Civil War. The association between Antonio Abeytier and the Cannon family is not known.

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Letter from Alfred Shields, 11 Dec. 1862; Sketches	Box 1, Folder 2
Sketch, Envelope [n.d.]	Box 1, Folder 3
Lock of Hair	Artifacts: Accession no. 2000.0480
Lock of Hair Sewn to Broach	Artifacts: Accession no. 2000.0480
Letters from Hattie Oilers, 30 April 1863; 1 May 1865; Valentine	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter to "Jake," 7 May 1865	Box 1, Folder 5
Letter to "Henry," 30 Nov. 1873; Poem	Box 1, Folder 6
Fragments, 10 Dec. 1863; 22 May 1864; Flower Sketch	Box 1, Folder 7

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://157.91.92.2/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2681).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.

