

**McLean Family
Papers, 1779-1944 (bulk 1861-1865)**

SC20811

Quantity: 5 Boxes (1.5 cubic ft.)
Access: Open to research
Acquisition: Gift of Dorothy B. Butler, Schenectady, New York, September 1993
Processed By: Fred Bassett, Senior Librarian, Manuscripts and Special Collections, July 1994

Biographical Note:

William Clark McLean was born April 8, 1843, near Cambridge, New York, where many of his ancestors had resided since shortly after the Revolution. He had originally pursued a career in dentistry when engaged in an apprenticeship in the office of Dr. William Newcomb of Cambridge before enlisting in the army on August 8, 1862 to serve three years. He mustered in as a corporal in Company G of the 123rd New York Regiment of the Infantry and was promoted to sergeant-major on March 27, 1865. He mustered out with the regiment on June 8, 1865 near Washington D.C. The 123rd Infantry, known as the Washington County Regiment, was involved in several significant battles and campaigns of the Civil War, including Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Kennesaw Mountain (Ga.), Atlanta, and Sherman's March to the Sea.

Shortly after mustering out of military service he returned to Cambridge, where he stayed only for a while before moving west. He first settled in Nebraska, where he married and raised four children. Later the family moved to Upland, California. He died January 19, 1924 in the Soldiers Hospital at Sawtelle, California.

Scope and Contents Note:

The bulk of these papers consist of the letters (originals and transcripts) and diaries (transcripts) that provide a comprehensive account of William Clark McLean's military service during the Civil War. The letters, addressed to his parents and siblings, began September 2, 1862, when he wrote from Arlington Heights, Virginia, about the review of the 123rd Regiment by the Union Army high command. In October he described the encampment near Harpers Ferry, foraging for food, and skirmishes with Confederate troops. By February his company was encamped at Stafford Courthouse, Virginia, where it remained until June. During these months the 123rd Regiment participated in the Battle of Chancellorsville, of which he saw no action since he remained behind the lines guarding regimental papers and record books. His letter of July 7, written from Pleasant Valley, Maryland, contains an account of the bloodshed and carnage he observed at Gettysburg.

In a letter dated October 3, 1862, McLean wrote about the long and arduous march from Virginia, through Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee to Bridgeport, Alabama. This letter also contains comments about climate, landscape, and the inhabitants of places he had never seen before. In June he wrote the first of several detailed letters on the Atlanta Campaign in which the

123rd Regiment was a major participant. His description of the action he witnessed at the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain (Ga.) and the Union Army invasion of Atlanta is quite good. In November and December he wrote about the pillaging and burning of southern towns along the route of Sherman's March to the Sea. Similarly, from February through April he described the campaign through the Carolinas along with several engagements with Confederate troops under the command of General Joseph E. Johnston. The letters conclude June 5, 1865, with the announcement that he was mustering out and would be home soon.

The diaries (transcripts) compliment the letters by providing a brief summary of daily activities and experiences. Typical entries include notes on the weather and the position of Company G on a given day. Altogether, the letters and diaries provide a good personal narrative of important events of the Civil War.

The remainder of these papers consists of a variety of materials that are most valuable for genealogical and historical information on the McLean family which had resided in the vicinity of Cambridge, New York (Washington County). Included are many letters ca.1789-ca.1900, estate papers, land titles, military service records, and printed ephemera. The most significant items are two letters written by Albert Eldridge, 1849 and 1850, about his life and experiences in California's Mother Lode country during the heyday of the Gold Rush, and two letters of 1944 signed by former United States Senator and Representative James W. Wadsworth of Geneseo, New York.

Container List:

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	Letter book: Civil War letters of William Clark McLean, 1862-1865; 1 v. (ca. 100 p.) 38 cm.
2	1	Transcripts of Civil War letters of William Clark McLean transcribed by Wila McLean Rich (daughter of William Clark McLean, ca.1937; ca. 85 items
2	2-3	Photocopies of above transcripts
3	1-8	Transcripts of the Diaries, 1862-1865, of William Clark McLean (Originals are not available)
4	1-2	Letters, 1789-1810, to John and Mary Conger, 9 items
4	3	Letters, 1822-1830, Thomas McLean to William C. McLean, 4 items
4	4	Letters, 1823, 1834 and 1848, Mary and Catherine McLean, 3 items
4	5	Letters, 1849 and 1850, written by Albert Eldridge, 2 items
4	6	Letters, 1869-1876, to Lewis T. McLean, 7 items
4	7	Letters, 1883-1900, to Eliza McLean and other family members, 7 items
4	8	Letters: Hon. James W. Wadsworth to Louis T. McLean a. (T.L.S.) February 11, 1944 b. (T.L.S.) July 28, 1944
4	9	Legal Documents: a. Mortgage, November 2, 1779. Andrew and Thomas McLean to Melancton Freeman re: land situated in Town of Cambridge, New York (Washington County) b. Articles of Agreement between Thomas McLean and Aaron M. Perine,

Box	Folder	Contents
		February 13, 1807
4	10	Last Will and Testament and related estate papers of Lewis T. McLean, 1888, 6 items
4	11	Military Service Records: a. Lewis T. McLean, 50 Regt. of Infantry, N.Y. Militia b. Henry P. McLean, 28 th N.Y.S.N.G. Infantry Co. G c. DeWitt Eldridge, 123 rd N.Y. Infantry Co. G
4	12	Printed Materials: a. <i>New York Herald</i> , April 15, 1865 (front page) re: assassination of Abraham Lincoln b. Broadside: Shushan Public School Program, March 29, 1901, Shushan, N.Y.
4	13	Miscellaneous: a. Photographs of Albert and Nancy Eldridge, ca.1860 (2 items) b. Wedding Announcement: W.L. Maxwell and Cornelia McLean, 1882 c. Cemetery Deed of Albert Eldridge d. Affidavit, 1894 re: Louisa Cornelia Brewster
4	14	Scrapbook, ca.1930. Contains news clippings and other materials related to McLean family history. Also includes two letters, 1931 and 1932, written by California State Senator, Cadet Taylor of Pomona
5	1	Diary, 1849-1850, William C. McLean, Sr.[?]; 1 v. (ca. 115 p.); 41 cm.
5	2	Leather pouches, ca.1840s-1860s, 4 items

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