

Chamberlain Family Papers, 1860-1890, bulk 1861-1870

SC22767

QUANTITY: 1 box (0.30 cu. ft.)
ACCESS: Open to research
ACQUISITION: Purchased by the New York State Library on June 4, 2003.
PROCESSED BY: Christine Alexander, Student Assistant, State University of New York at Albany, May 2009

Biographical Note:

Orlando and William Chamberlin [sic] were Civil War soldiers from a farming family in Cameron Mills, Steuben County, N.Y., who served in different infantry regiments during the war. The brothers, born about 1843, were the sons of Nelson and Dimis Chamberlain. (Note that although family members consistently spelled their last name as "Chamberlin," the military records for the brothers list their last name as "Chamberlain.")

Orlando Chamberlain enlisted as a private in Company E of the 34th New York Infantry Regiment on May 18, 1861 at Addison, New York. He was wounded in the foot at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, and treated at the Patent Office Hospital and the Carver Hospital in Washington, D.C. Orlando was discharged because of his injuries on April 20, 1863, and went home to recover. He later mustered into Company K of the 14th New York Heavy Artillery Regiment on December 28, 1863. During fighting in Petersburg, Va., on July 30, 1864, he was taken a prisoner of war and confined in the Civil War prison at Danville, Va. He was mustered out of the service as a corporal on May 29, 1865 at Elmira, N.Y., and later moved to Hampden, Ohio.

William Chamberlain, enlisted in Company B of the 86th New York Infantry, the "Steuben Rangers," on August 30, 1861. The regiment performed guard duty in and around Washington, D.C., from November 1861 until they were ordered to the front and to fight in the Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862. William became ill around this time, and was discharged from the Army for disability on January 13, 1863. The correspondence suggests that Orlando and William's younger brother, Rosel, also served in the military, but there are no details about his service.

Scope and Content Note:

These papers consist primarily of letters written to William Chamberlain, with a significant portion written during the Civil War, 1861-1865, from his brother, Orlando, who was actively engaged in fighting, and from other members of his family and his friends. The letters give a

comprehensive account of the brothers' service in the Civil War. The collection also includes letters written after the Civil War, dealing with family and personal matters, and with the sale of crops, timber or land. In addition to the correspondence, there are a few other papers, including one military pass granted to William, valentines sent to William, and a few financial records such as an assessment of land lots and an invoice for Sunday school supplies.

Orlando Chamberlain's Civil War letters generally state where he was camped and often give some details about the fighting. One letter was written while he was a prisoner of war. The letters to William from family and friends talk about his military service, the harvests, sickness and deaths, news of other family members, local gossip, criticism of the Army generals, and information about other friends and relatives away at war. Letters written by the family during the war years often contain two or more messages written by separate family members sharing the same piece of stationery. A number of letters addressed to "Darling William" from Cornelia are written partially in code, presumably to ensure that the contents remain private.

Container List:

Box	Folder	Description
		Letters from Orlando Chamberlain, 1860-1882
1	1	Civil War letters, 1861, from Orlando to William and family <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Addison (N.Y.), May 23, 1861 b. Washington (D.C.), July 10, 1861 c. Camp Scienhy (?), September 24, 1861 d. Opposite Ball's Bluff (Va.), December 15, 1861
1	2	Civil War letters, 1862, from Orlando to William and family <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Camp McClellan near Poolesville (Md.), January 30, 1862 b. Camp McClellan near Poolesville (Md.), February 11, 1862 c. Camp McClellan near Poolesville (Md.), February 18, 1862 d. Camp McClellan near Poolesville (Md.), February 23, 1862 e. Camp Bolivar Heights near Harpers Ferry (W.Va.), March 5, 1862 f. Camp Bolivar Heights near Harpers Ferry (W.Va.), March 15, 1862 g. Washington (D.C.), March 28, 1862 h. Camp Winfield Scott near Yorktown (Va.) ca. April 1862 i. Camp near James River (Va.), July 10, 1862 j. Camp near Harrison's Landing (Va.), July 18, 1862 k. Camp Harrison's Landing (Va.), July 26, 1862 l. Patent Office Hospital, Washington (D.C.), ca. Fall 1862 m. Cameron Mills (N.Y.), December 14, 1862
1	3	Civil War letters, 1863-1864, from Orlando to William and family <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Carver Hospital, Washington (D.C.), January 18, 1863 b. Carver Hospital, Washington (D.C.), January 29, 1863 c. Warehouse Barracks, Elmira (N.Y.), January 31, 1864 d. Warehouse Barracks, Elmira (N.Y.), February 28, 1864 e. Mr. Johnson's house, Elmira (N.Y.), March 19, 1864 f. Barracks No. 1, Elmira (N.Y.), April 15, 1864

Box	Folder	Description
		g. Barracks No. 1, Elmira (N.Y.), April 18, 1864 h. Camp near Petersburg (Va.), June 18, 1864 i. Front lines near Petersburg (Va.), July 17, 1864 j. Trenches in front of Petersburg (Va.), July 24, 1864 k. Prison, Danville (Va.), August 3, 1864
1	4	Letters, 1880-1881, from Orlando to William and family a. Golden Belt (Kan.), 1880 (3 items) b. Hamden (Ohio), 1881 (6 items)
1	5	Letters, 1882 and ca. 1880s, from Orlando to William and family from Hampden (Ohio) (10 items)
1	6	Letters, undated, from Orlando (2 items) a. To his parents from Farmington, Tioga County, Ohio [possibly pre-Civil War] b. To William, no location noted [possibly post-Civil War]
		Letters to William Chamberlin 1860-1890
1	7	Letters, 1860-1861, to William from family and friends in Cameron Mills, N.Y., and Farmington and Towanda, Pa. (10 items) a. 1860 (2 items) b. 1861 (8 items)
1	8	Letters, 1862 (January- May), to William from family and friends in Cameron Mills, N.Y.; Towanda, Pa.; and Conneaut, Ohio (13 items)
1	9	Letters, 1862 (July-December), to William from family and friends in Cameron Mills, N.Y. and Conneaut, Ohio (18 items)
1	10	Letters, 1863-1868, to William from family and friends in Great Valley and West Farmington, N.Y.; Elk Run, Pa.; Easton, Md.; and Portage, Mich. (12 items)
1	11	Letters, 1869, to William from family and friends in Alma, Great Valley and West Farmington, N.Y., and Portage, Mich. (13 items)
1	12	Letters, 1870-1890, to William from family and friends in Western New York (Alma, Great Valley, Pikeville, and Wellsville) (14 items)
1	13	Letters, undated, to William from family and friends in Cameron Mills and Paynesville, N.Y. and Towanda, Pa. (9 items)
		Financial Records
1	14	a. Letter relating to sale of lumber, March 5, 1869 b. Invoice for Sunday School supplies, April 28, 1882 c. Assessment of building lots, June 8, 1882
		Miscellaneous
1	15	a. Military pass from Camp Good Hope (D.C.), 86 th Regiment, March 24, 1862 b. Valentines, 1862 and undated (3 items)

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