

MONKS, ZERAH COSTON, B. 1841.

Zerah Coston Monks papers, 1859-1867

Emory University
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Monks, Zerah Coston, b. 1841.
Title: Zerah Coston Monks papers, 1859-1867
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 376
Extent: .25 linear ft. (1 box) ; 1 microfilm reel (MF)
Abstract: Microfilm copy of the papers of educator, carpenter, Union soldier, and oil field worker Zerah Coston Monks including correspondence, a sketch of the Fredericksburg battlefront, and a family history.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Additional Physical Form

Some materials available only on microfilm.

Source

Loaned for microfilming, 1961, with subsequent additions.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Zerah Coston Monks papers, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by EK, 1961.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Zerah Coston Monks, son of the Reverend Mr. and Mrs. William Monks, was born July 18, 1841, in Curlsville, Clarion County, Pennsylvania. There were six children in the family: Thomas Monks (10 years older than Coston), Rachel Monks, Margaret Monks, Sarah Jane Monks, Abner Jackson Monks (died in infancy), and Zerah Coston Monks. Their mother, Harriet Duncan Burns Monks, died in 1845. In 1846 Reverend Monks married Martha Wilson Clarke. They had one son, George, born in 1848.

Thomas Monks's wife, Emily, was a first cousin of Hannah T. Rohrer, who lived at Stewart's Run, Pennsylvania, in Venango County. Hannah was the third daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Rohrer. She was born at Stewart's Run on April 19, 1842. There were seven daughters and one son in the Rohrer family. In 1859, Hannah and her two older sisters were living with their grandparents, who had a farm at Stewart's Run. The girls apparently alternated going to school with teaching school, and Hannah also kept house for her grandparents. Coston was living with his brother, Thomas, a carpenter and builder. Coston was learning this trade. In December 1859 Coston went to Twinsburgh, Ohio, where his father was the Methodist minister, to attend school. In March 1860 his father died and around the end of May, Coston was back in Curlsville with his brother again. Beginning December 1, 1860, he taught school at Churchville, near Curlsville. After his school closed, he went to visit Hannah and obtain work in the oil fields.

In 1862, Coston enlisted with the 62nd Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment for three years, then with the 155th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment (Zouaves) as sergeant. He was involved in the battles of Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg, where he was captured (1863), and was imprisoned in Richmond, Virginia, and Camp Parole, Maryland. He was wounded (1865) and hospitalized in Washington, D.C. and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania until the war ended. After his marriage he lived in the oil boom town of Pithole City, Pennsylvania, where he ran a hotel and a photograph gallery with a brother-in-law. He and Hannah later moved to Vineland, New Jersey.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of a microfilm copy of the papers of Zerah Coston Monks from 1859-1867 as well as some original material. The main body of the collection consists of correspondence between Coston Monks and Hannah Rohrer between January 6, 1859 and June 19, 1867; 265 letters in all, of which 208 are by Coston and 57 by Hannah. Most of the letters were written while Coston was in the army. He was in active service in Virginia by early September 1862 and took part in the battles of Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. He was captured July 2, 1863 at Gettysburg. He left a very brief penciled diary of the march from Gettysburg to Staunton, Virginia from July 2 to July 20. (The original of this diary is not included, but there is a typescript of it.) He spent two months in Bell Island Prison at Richmond. During this time there were no letters. Later he was sent to Camp Parole, Annapolis, Maryland. From there he writes on September 25, 1863, telling how he was captured and describing the march to Staunton.

On May 13, 1864, he and other prisoners at Camp Parole were ordered back to their regiments. In early February 1865 he went on furlough and was back at camp near Hatcher's Run, Virginia

by February 20, 1865. On April 1 he was wounded in the arm and leg and sent to Lincoln General Hospital in Washington. From there he was transferred on May 5 to a hospital in Pittsburgh. His last letter from the hospital is dated May 27, 1865.

In addition to these letters there is a group of letters written between October 28, 1862 and July 29, 1865 by Coston to his sisters Margaret and Sarah Jane and one to his stepmother; 15 letters to Hannah Rohrer, December 22, 1862-May 8, 1864, from Simson Siggins, a Stewart's Run boy who served as a fifer in Co. C, 83d Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment; 4 letters, August 15, 1861-December 5, 1864, from Thomas Monks to Coston (typescripts only); and 16 letters from George Monks, March 9, 1864-October 16, 1864, to his mother, sister, and brother Coston, during his service in the 9th Company, 1st Ohio Infantry Regiment. Included in this group is a letter to Margaret Monks, George's sister, August 2, 1864, from a New York soldier who had found a letter to her from George on the body of a dead soldier at Petersburg and had assumed that her brother was the dead man. Another letter, October 16, 1864, Mansion House U. S. Hospital, Alexandria, Virginia, from E. Gray to Mrs. Monks, informs her of George's illness. Following this is a letter from Mrs. Monks to Coston, dated December 5, 1864. A few miscellaneous items complete the collection. Among these is a sketch of the battle front of the 2nd Division, 5th Corps, at Fredericksburg, drawn by Coston. Typescript copies of all the letters, made by the owner, are filmed with the originals.

Original materials include a family history (typescript) of the Monks family with some account of the Rohrer family and a battle front sketch of the battle of Fredericksburg.

Arrangement Note

Aranged in chronological order.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	"Descendants of Reverend William Monks of the Erie Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church"
1	2	Notes on the microfilmed letters, 1859-1867, by Caroline Monks
1	3	Sketch of the battlefront of the 2nd Division and the 3rd Corps at Fredericksburg
