

WESSON, HALE, 1843-1875.
Hale Wesson papers, 1861-1864

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Wesson, Hale, 1843-1875.
Title: Hale Wesson papers, 1861-1864
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 379
Extent: 1 microfilm reel (MF)
Abstract: Microfilm copy of the letters of Union soldiers Hale, James, and Edward Wesson of Massachusetts, who mainly served in the 25th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment during the Civil War.
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.

Source

Loaned for microfilming, 1961.

Citation

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

Processing

Processed by EK, 1961.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Hale Wesson was born in Grafton, Massachusetts on January 13, 1843. On September 16, 1861 he enlisted at Worcester, Massachusetts in the 25th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. In 1863 he was discharged from this regiment and assigned to the Regulars as a member of the Signal Corps. Most of his letters were written from the vicinity of New Bern, North Carolina. In 1873 he married Miss Mary Jane Bancroft and they had at least one child, Paul B. Wesson. On a furlough issued to Wesson in 1863 his occupation at the time of his enlistment is given as farmer. Hale Wesson had two brothers, James and Alonzo, who also served in the Civil War, apparently in the same regiment with Hale until his transfer. Another brother, Edward, was a sutler or employed by a sutler with a Massachusetts regiment. Their father was Calvin Wesson of Saundersville, Massachusetts. Hale Wesson died in 1875.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of a microfilm copy of approximately 64 letters from Hale Wesson, James Wesson, and Edward Wesson to their parents and to each other, November 3, 1861-December 18, 1864. Most of the letters are by Hale. Almost all of the letters from the brothers are written to their father. There is also one letter to Calvin Wesson from George R. Brown, evidently a friend of the Wesson boys, who was also serving in a Massachusetts regiment near New Bern. There is one letter from Alonzo to his father, and one from Hale to his young brother Gilbert at home (January 20, 1864) in which he encourages Gilbert to do well in his studies. The collection also includes furlough issued to Hale in 1863; a pass issued to him in March 1865; 2 photographs of an unidentified man, probably one of the Wessons; and 4 scraps of paper giving the dates of Hale's birth, marriage, and death, and the names and birth dates of 3 children; 2 scraps-perhaps from a diary-mentioning Hale's marriage to "Jennie" Bancroft and the birth of their son, Paul Bancroft Wesson.

Arrangement Note

Correspondence arranged in chronological order.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
MF1	1	1861 November 3-[December?] 29, 1861: Hale writes to his parents and his brothers from Camp Hicks, Annapolis, Maryland. December 17, 1864. He describes and denounces the sutler's practices.
MF1	2	1862 January 16 -March 9, 1862: Hale writes his parents from on board the steamer "New York," describing life and activities on the ship, difficulties encountered on account of the rough seas, etc. He tells something of the engagement at Roanoke Island in February 1862. James and Alonzo were also on the "New York" apparently.
MF1	3	1862 April 5 -December 25, 1862: April 5. Hale writes his parents from camp near New Bern, North Carolina, mentioning his participation in the battle of New Bern; he praises Burnside's sympathy for the wounded, reports that the camp is "over swarmed" with contrabands working for 48.00 per month. April 5 and 6. James Wesson writes his parents from New Bern; he has worked out a code by which he can communicate with his father if he should be captured. April 16. George Brown writes to Calvin Wesson from New Bern; he believes the Confederacy is weakening and the war will be over soon. August 1. James writes his father about a march to Trenton, North Carolina on which they captured a squad of Confederates, then marched on to "Polarksvill" [ie. Pollocksville, North Carolina], visiting plantations and destroying mills en route before returning to New Bern. October 7. Hale writes his father from Camp Oliver, New Bern, about the great amount of sickness in the camp. He expresses his resentment of men who tried to avoid the draft or who accepted bonuses for enlisting. December 25. Hale writes his father a description of the battle at Kinston, North Carolina, including a sketch of the area, and also describes the battle at Goldsboro, North Carolina.
MF1	4	1863 January 17 -November 21, 1863: Hale, James, and Alonzo are apparently still stationed near New Bern most of this time, but the regiment is sent to Plymouth, North Carolina to build a fort. Hale writes from Camp Flusser, Plymouth, on April 25 and describes the suffering of Southern women in the war. May 24. He writes from New Bern of an expedition to take a rebel camp at Gum Swamp. Before the Union forces could return to camp with their prisoners, they were attacked and had heavy losses. August 1. Hale writes that he has taken part in two expeditions, one to Swift Creek and one to the mouth of the Black Water to burn a bridge. Sometime in August or September he went home on furlough. September 25 and 26. Hale writes his father from Red House Station, an outpost 12 miles from New Bern. He expresses disgust with the Negroes and also makes some comments on what a soldier wants from life in the army. October 24. Hale writes from New Bern that he has become a member of the regular army and is assigned to the Signal Corps.
MF1	5	1864 January 20 -December 18, 1864: Hale writes his young brother Gillie at home on January 20 and mentions the schools for the Negroes in New Bern in

which both adults and children study. February 17 he mentions an attack on the Signal Corps outpost. May 29. He writes his father of the disaster which took place when four torpedoes being unloaded from the train at the camp exploded, killing about 60 men. At this time he is stationed at the Bachelors Creek outpost of the Signal Corps near New Bern. July 31. He writes in defense of soldier's wives, sympathizing with the hardships they have to endure. August 26. He again writes in defense of "fallen women" and denounces gossips and the double standard. September 21. He writes of the yellow fever epidemic which has broken out in New Bern. October 11. He has been placed in charge of the signal station at Camp Palmer near New Bern. October 27. He writes that he is unable to leave camp, though the time for his discharge has passed, because of the quarantine to prevent the spread of the fever. He says that probably three-fourths of the civilian population has died of the fever and many soldiers. The last letter, written December 18, 1864 by Edward Wesson from "Bermuda lids" [i.e. Bermuda hundred, Virginia], suggests that Hale, who is now out of the army and is at home, could probably find a job if he came down to Virginia. At this time Edward was apparently working for a sutler with one of the Massachusetts regiments. On March 31, 1865 a pass was issued at Bermuda Hundred, Virginia to hale Wesson, "Clerk for Watson, Sutler," to go to the headquarters of the 40th Massachusetts Volunteers, indicating that Hale apparently followed his brother's suggestion.
