

MSA 50

Gale - Morse Family Papers, 1861-1876

Scope & Content

The papers consist for the most part of letters written by Elmore and Woodbury, Vermont, family members during the Civil War, 1861-65. The collection focuses on Justus F. Gale (1837-1863), Benjamin Franklin Morse (1828-1924), and Franklin B. Morse (1844-1932), all of whom served in the 8th Regiment of Vermont Volunteers. Gale was in Company A and the Morses were in Company E.

The papers include letters Justus F. Gale wrote to his family from various posts in Louisiana until his death in 1863, letters Benjamin Franklin Morse wrote to his wife in West Woodbury from Louisiana in 1862, and letters Franklin B. Morse received while he served in the army. The letters to Franklin B. Morse include letters from family members who were also serving in the army as well as letters from his family at home. Franklin B. Morse's war-time diaries, 1863-64, are also part of the collection.

The bulk of the papers were a gift to the Vermont Historical Society in 1990 by Herbert Gale of Morrisville and occupy .50 linear feet of shelf space (ms. acc. no. 90.29). The photocopies of the letters of Benjamin Franklin Morse were a gift of Mrs. Carole Fontana and the Carr family through Eleanor Angell. Photocopies of five letters received by Franklin B. Morse were a gift of Mrs. Douglas Churchill.

Genealogy and Background

Jonas Gale (1800-1874) of Woodbury, Vermont, married Abigail Albee (1801-1869) in 1827. Their son, Justus, who wrote many of the letters in the collection, enlisted September 23, 1861, and died September 19, 1863, of "chronic diarrhea."

The Gale's daughter, Samantha (1832-1892), married Benjamin Franklin Morse, 2nd, son of Ira and Huldah (Ainsworth) Morse in 1866. He was known as Frank or Franklin B. Morse to distinguish him from his uncle, Benjamin Franklin Morse (1828-1924), and is referred to by this name in the papers.

Various members of the Morse, Ainsworth, and Lawson families are authors of letters to Franklin B. Morse or are mentioned in the latter's diaries. Franklin B. Morse's mother was an Ainsworth and his aunt, Harriet Morse, married Truman Lawson.

Jonas Gale, is the great-grandfather of the donor, Herbert Gale. Mr. Gale, although he was not a Morse, lived in a Morse house and next to another Morse house in Morrisville.

Ms. Eleanor Angell, who was instrumental in bringing the collection to the Vermont Historical Society, is a great grand-daughter of a sister of Ira Morse. Ms.

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Angell has provided genealogical material, inventoried letters, and transcribed the diaries as well as some of the letters (Folder 1). Her arrangement of the letters has been retained: chronological with envelopes following their respective letters. Photocopies of the letters not owned by the VHS and the names of the current owners have been supplied by Ms. Angell.

Related Collections

All of the Benjamin F. Morse letters to his wife, Rosina, in this collection are photocopies. The originals are still in the possession of his family. About half of the original letters have been microfilmed and are available from Vermont Public Records, film 2845.

Additional materials concerning Benjamin F. Morse are located in the VHS manuscript collection: MS B M835. These include his "Personal Military and Civil History" and a photograph of Morse and his wife, Ellen. Photocopies of these items are in Folder 1.

Organization of the Papers

The papers are organized in four series:

- I. Genealogy and background materials
- II. Justus F. Gale (1837-1863)
- III. Benjamin F. Morse (1828-1924)
- IV. Franklin B. Morse (1844-1932)

I. Genealogy and background materials

Genealogical materials (Folder 1) include hand-written charts showing the descendants of Peter and Jonas Gale, and the connections between the Morse, Ainsworth and Lawson families. Additional background material about the family members who either wrote the letters or diaries or are mentioned in them include: a typescript of notes on the Franklin B. Morse diaries (1863-64); hand-written notes on the Benjamin F. Morse letters (1862); and a hand-written list of the Ainsworth, Morse and Lawson family members who served in the Civil War.

II. Justus F. Gale (1837-1863)

Justus F. Gale enlisted in Co. A of the 8th Regiment of Vermont Volunteers September 23, 1861 and died in Louisiana on September 19, 1863.

The series contains letters Gale wrote to his brothers, sisters and his parents, who were living in Elmore, Vermont, while he was in the Army (Folders 3-8). Gale describes his health, the food, the boredom, his surroundings and the action his Regiment saw. He also relays news of other Elmore men who serve with him. He expresses concern for his family's trials during his absence such as the death of his brother Charles. An inventory of the Gale letters indicate the post-mark and addressee of each letter (Folder 2).

III. Benjamin F. Morse (1828-1924)

Benjamin F. Morse, a farmer in East Elmore, enlisted as a Sergeant in Co. E, 8th Regiment of Vermont Volunteers in December 1861. He was stationed in Louisiana, wounded in September 1862 and mustered out in 1864.

This series contains the letters Morse wrote in 1862 to his ill wife, Rosina, who lived in Woodbury with the family of his brother, Ira, during her husband's absence (Folder 10). Rosina died in March 1863. All of the letters are photocopies. The letters have been transcribed (Folder 11) and an inventory indicates the location of the originals (Folder 9).

IV. Franklin B. Morse (1844-1932)

Franklin B. Morse was born in Woodbury, Vermont, and enlisted in December 1861. Morse married Samatha Gale (1832-1892) in 1866 and they lived in East Elmore until about 1892.

This series contains Morse's diaries and letters he received while fighting the war. Most of the entries in Morse's diaries were made while he was as a private in the 8th Vermont Regiment in Louisiana. They are very brief and concern the weather and any noteworthy events. Morse returned home in June of 1864 and the entries from that date through December 1864 concern his life in West Woodbury (Folder 12). The diaries have been transcribed (Folder 13).

The majority of the letters in this series were written by family members to Morse. Most of the letters relate to events at home, news of neighbors, and work on the farm. Other letters include those from male family members while they were serving in the Civil War (Folders 15 - 18). There are only two letters in collection which Morse wrote himself.

Most of the letters are originals, but there are five photocopies of letters written at the end of 1863 and the beginning of 1864 (Folder 17).

The miscellaneous letters (Folder 19) include a letter from an unidentified friend (1865) and a denial for Bounty from the Treasury Department (1876).

Three specialized finding aids for this series are located in Folder 14: a) a chronological inventory of the collection; b) an inventory by the writer's name; and c) a list of the family members who served in the Civil War and a summary of their service.

Inventory

I. Genealogy

Folder 1 Genealogy and background materials

II. Justus F. Gale (1837-1863)

- 2 Letters, inventory
- 3 _____, Dec. 1861 - March 1862
- 4 _____, April 1862 - June 1862
- 5 _____, July 1862 - August 1862
- 6 _____, Sept. 1862 - Dec. 1862
- 7 _____, Jan. 1863 - March 1863
- 8 _____, April 1863 - August 1863

II. Benjamin F. Morse (1828-1924)

- 9 Letters, inventory
- 10 _____, March - Dec. 1862
- 11 _____, transcriptions

IV. Franklin B. Morse (1844-1932)

- 12 Diaries, 1863-64
- 13 _____, transcriptions and notes
- 14 Letters, inventory, 1862-65
- 15 _____, Jan. - June 1862
- 16 _____, July - Sept. 1862
- 17 _____, May 1863 - May 1864
- 18 _____, July 1864 - March 1865
- 19 _____, 1865 & 1876