

James Hope (1819-1892)
Letters, 1853-1954
MSA 230-231

Introduction

This collection consists of letters exchanged by James Hope (1819-1892) of Castleton, Vermont, a portrait painter and landscapist, and his wife Julia, between 1853 and 1872. In addition, there are business letters to James Hope for this same period as well as miscellaneous family letters that span the Civil War period into the twentieth century.

The letters were purchased by the Vermont Historical Society library in March 2000 from William Marks who had previously purchased them from Mapes Auctioneers, Vestal, New York, in February 1999 (ms. acc. no. 2000.7). The letters are shelved in the two flip top archival boxes (1 linear foot).

Biographical Note

An exhibit catalog entitled *M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815-1865*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and Harvard University Press, 1949 (VHS uncat. pam. Hope, James; photocopied in Folder 0) provides the following biography of James Hope:

Born at Drygrange, Roxburghshire, Scotland, on November 29, 1818/19 (equal authority for both years). After the death of his mother he was brought to Canada by his father, who died of cholera about 1831. According to tradition James Hope was fifteen when he walked from the Canadian farm where he had spent his boyhood to Fairhaven, Vermont, to begin his five-year apprenticeship to a wagon-maker. With the money he saved, he was able to spend a year at Castleton Seminary. Apparently an accident to his ankle, which temporarily confined him to his home, gave him the leisure to try his hand at portraiture, and his first efforts were successful enough for him to set up as a professional artist at West Rutland in 1843. The next two years he spent in Montreal painting portraits and then returned to Castleton, where he built a house in 1851 and supported his family by teaching painting and drawing at the Seminary. Landscape painting soon began to occupy all his spare moments, combining as it did his love for the country with his new-found talent. The catalogue of his paintings sold some years after his death mentions that at this period "two famous landscape artists- one great through color-power, the other through majesty of line, came into his life with most grateful results to him and them." The first was Frederick Church, who in the summer of 1849 visited the spa at Clarendon Springs, Vermont, only a few miles from Castleton, and exhibited two Vermont scenes at the Academy the following year. He may have exerted a strong

influence on the Vermont painter's career, for in the early eighteen-fifties Hope abandoned teaching entirely and took a studio in New York, where he painted during the winter, returning to Castleton in the summer. He first exhibited at the National Academy in 1854. The second painter to whom the catalogue refers is probably Albert Bierstadt. There are paintings of the Yosemite Valley by Hope, probably after Bierstadt sketches, and of Jerusalem, the sea of Galilee, and Joppa after photographs by Bierstadt (in this case presumably Edward Bierstadt, the photographer and brother of the painter).

Hope married Julia M. Smith of West Rutland on September 20, 1841. Four of their children survived to adulthood: Henry F.; J. Douglass, who became a photographer; Jessie; and Addie, who married George A. Stearns and died in Argentina in 1871.

The catalog biography continues:

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Hope was active in recruiting a company of volunteers, of which he was chosen captain, which was mustered into the service as Company B of the Second Vermont Regiment. He took part in eleven battles including both battles of Bull Run and often served as topographical engineer. Partly through his own interest and partly through the assignments of his superiors, he made on-the-spot studies of many of the great battles of the War and of buildings of historic interest in Washington and Virginia. These were later developed into twelve- and sixteen foot canvases, which became a sort of official pictorial record of the War, were approved by generals and statesmen, and were exhibited in various parts of the country, arousing tremendous enthusiasm.

In 1868, the Middletown, Vermont mineral springs were rediscovered and their curative properties became well known both locally and beyond Vermont. Hope became the general agent for Grays and Clark's Middletown Healing Spring Water in the New York City area in 1869(?); he sold mineral water for several winters while he continued his artistic endeavors.

In 1872, Hope built a studio and art gallery in Watkins Glen, New York, where he lived until his death on October 20, 1892.

Scope and Content

The majority of the letters in the collection were exchanged by James Hope and his wife, Julia, between 1853 and 1872. During the winter Hope lived in New York City to maintain his art studio while his wife remained in their Castleton, Vermont, home.

A shorter series of family letters includes Hope's letters to his children, the children's letters to each other, and to their mother; most of these were written between

1864 and the 1880s. Later letters in this series are those of the Hope's grandchildren; the most recent of these is 1919.

In another shorter series are letters to James Hope from friends and business associates between 1854 and 1888.

Miscellaneous items related to Hope include several invitations to New York City exhibitions and Hope's business card as New York agent for Middletown Healing Spring Water.

Organization

The collection is organized in four series:

- I. Correspondence, James Hope and his wife, Julia Smith Hope, 1856-1872
- II. Hope family letters, 1860-1919
- III. Letters to James Hope (non-family), 1850-1870
- IV. Miscellaneous, 1870s-1954

Series Notes

I. Correspondence of James and Julia Hope

More than half the letters in the collection are those exchanged by James and his wife, Julia, of Castleton, Vermont, between 1853 and 1872. Hope regularly spent the winter at his studio in New York City while his family remained in Castleton. Although Hope served in the army during the Civil War, the only letters for this period, 1861 to 1863, are those written by Julia Hope.

Hope writes about his exhibitions and of his paintings. Financial worries continue to plague him. In a March 1, 1869, letter on Middletown (Vermont) Healing Spring Water letterhead, Hope is listed as General Agent, for the New York City area. This was, no doubt, an effort to supplement the family income; in that letter he expresses his hope for better water business in the fall.

In an April 10, 1870 letter, Hope writes that he has "painted 53 pictures since the first of January." The series of letters ends in 1872 when Hope moved his family to Watkins Glen, New York where he opened a private art gallery.

Many of Julia Hope's letters have faded and are virtually illegible.

II. Hope Family Letters

Family letters span the period 1866 to 1919. They include James Hope's letters to his children, correspondence between the children, and the children's letters to their mother. In a July 9, 1872, George A. Stearns writes to James Hope from Argentina, soon after the death of his wife, Addie, the Hope's eldest daughter. Later letters in this series are

exchanges among the Hope grandchildren, some of whom remained in Watkins Glen, New York.

III. Letters to James Hope

The series of letters to James Hope begins in 1854 after his first exhibit at the National Academy and continues until 1888. Hope moved from Castleton, Vermont, to Watkins Glen, New York in 1872. The letters are an assortment from friends and business contacts in New York and Philadelphia. Hope no doubt conducted a lively correspondence in a continuing effort to market his art. Hope's engravings for George T. Stevens book on the Civil War published in 1865, *Three Years in the Sixth Corps*, were a source of income (George T. Stevens to James Hope, October 23, 1866).

IV. Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous materials include several invitations for gallery openings and James Hope's business card as the New York agent for Middletown Healing Spring Water. Information about the Hope family includes a genealogical chart for the Hope family members in Canada and a 1954 newspaper obituary of Douglas A. Hope, James and Julia Hope's grandson.

Considerable work was done with the letters prior to their arrival at the VHS by the original purchaser, Bill Marks. The plastic sleeves and historical arrangement have been retained. Marks's notes on the contents of selected letters were transcribed and are included in the inventory below.

Original letters that are in possession of the original purchaser and for which photocopies are filed in the collection are:

- November 27, 1862 Julia to James Hope in Washington (?)
- May 4, 1866: to Hope from Childs and Jenks Gallery of Art, Boston
- April 10, 1867: Hope to Julia from New York City

Related Collections in VHS Library

About James Hope

- 1) Currier Gallery of Art *Bulletin*, Autumn 1970.
VHS Uncat pam (photocopy in Folder 0)
- 2) Freeman, Larry. *Hope paintings*. Century House, 1861. VHS B H772
- 3) Hemenway, Abby. *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*. V. 3, p. 537-38.
VHS 974.30 H37 (photocopy in Folder 0)
- 4) *Mine eyes have seen the glory, the Civil War in art*. Harold Holzer and Mark E. Neely, Jr., eds. N.Y., 1993. VHS X973.78 M662hn
- 5) The John P. Clement Papers. Correspondence with Edward P. Hoyt, Editor of State Papers, photographs of paintings, exhibition catalogues, etc. ca.1970s. VHS manuscripts: Doc 153:35

The VHS library also has a slide of a letter from this collection, James Hope to Julia Hope, April 15, 1870 (VHS-S-313).

Examples of Hope's engravings

Stevens, George Thomas. *Three years in the sixth corps, a concise narrative of events in the Army of the Potomac, from 1861 to the close of the Rebellion*. April 1865. Albany, S.R. Gray, 1866. VHS 974.741 U65

About Middletown Mineral Springs

- 1) Middletown Mineral Springs, Co.
Middletown Spring Water [1869] *S 615.79M585m
- 2) *The Household*, v. III, 1870, p. 166. X051 H816
(photocopy in Folder 0 of an advertisement for the Middletown Springs Company).

Related Collections in VHS Museum

Oil paintings by James Hope

- 1) Winter quarters of the Vermont Brigade in front of Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1862-63, 1864. Location: Victorian Lobby (photocopy in Folder 0 from *In Context, Vermont Historical Society News and Notes*, v. #1, Fall 1996).

Inventory

I. Correspondence, James Hope and his wife, Julia Smith Hope, 1856-1872

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| MSA 230:1 | James Hope and Julia S. Hope Letters, 1853-55
<i>March 22, 1854, James Hope mentions "Cedar Swamp" painting and National Academy Exhibition.</i> |
| 2 | _____, 1856
<i>December 11, 1856, James Hope mentions secret new invention for taking pictures from miniatures to life size, which he would be hired to color.</i> |
| 3 | _____, 1857 and 1860 |
| 4 | _____, 1862 |
| 5 | _____, 1863 |
| 6 | _____, 1867 |
| 7 | _____, 1868, January – February |
| 8 | _____, 1868, March – December
<i>April 12, 1868, James Hope refers to Cincinnati exhibit of "Gem of the Forest."</i>
<i>December 10, 1868, letter. James Hope refers to "belocipeds" (bicycles).</i> |
| 9 | _____, 1869, January – March
<i>January 2, 1869. James Hope refers to Mr. And Mrs. Carlos Sherman (owner of the Rutland Marble Quarry, residents of Castleton).</i>
<i>March 16, 1869. James Hope refers to "Gem of the Forest."</i> |

- 10 _____, 1869, April
April 15, 1869, James Hope Refers to "Gem of the Forest."
- 11 _____, 1869, May
- MSA 231:1 _____, 1869, June – July
- 2 _____, 1870, March – April
- 3 _____, 1870, May – December
- 4 _____, 1871
- 5 _____, 1872, March – April

II. Hope family letters

- MSA 231:6 Family letters, 1864-6
- 7 _____, 1867-69
- 8 _____, 1870s
- 9 _____, 1880s
- 10 _____, 1890s
- 11 _____, 1900-1919

III. Letters to James Hope

- MSA 231:12 Letters, 1854-66
April 4, 1865. Exhibition of "Army of the Potomac". (John McClure to Hope)
May 1, 1865. Reference to engraving and death of President Lincoln. (John McClure to Hope)
March 4, 1866. Hope does "not paint portraits but little now". (A. McConnell to Hope)
- 13 _____, 1867-69
September 28, 1867. Reference to engraving "Army of the Potomac". (John McClure to Hope)
September 9, 1868. Reference to "Gem of the Forest" in Cincinnati exhibit. (from ? to Hope)
- MSA 231:14 Letters, 1871-75
March 7, 1872. References to Chicago Fire (1871) and "Gem of the Forest". (from Kate Doggett to Hope)
- 15 _____, 1876-88
June 25, 1876. Exhibiting painting at Centennial Exhibition. (James Earle to Hope)
- 16 _____, undated

IV. Miscellaneous

- MSA 231:17 Cards, invitations, etc., 1870s
- 18 Genealogy, 1953-54
- 19 Envelopes
- 20 Miscellaneous

Folder 0 photocopies of secondary material

About James Hope

- Hemenway, Abby. *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*. v. 3, p. 537-38. VHS 974.30

- *M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings* 1815-1865, p. 357-365. VHS uncat. pam.
- *Antiques*. January 1978 p. 170-175. VHS Museum Curator's file.
- Rosenkrantz, B. G., ed., *American habitat: historical perspective*. p. 250 and 256 VHS 333 R 723
- Currier Gallery of Art (Manchester, New Hampshire). *Bulletin*; Autumn, 1970. VHS uncat. pam.
- *Rutland Herald*, January 28, 1956 VHS uncat. pam.
- Photograph of Hope from Larry Freeman's *The Hope Paintings*. VHS B H772
- Stereograph of the Hope house in Castleton, Vermont VHS S PO-Hope, James

About Hope paintings in the VHS Museum

- *Winter Quarters of the Vermont Brigade In Front of Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1862-63.*
Information displayed with the painting currently in the Victorian Lobby of the VHS
- 2 portraits, Mary Wallis Gordon and Anna Gray Child. VHS Museum inventory.

Additional Hope letters, etc. sold by William J. Jenack Auctioneers, September 24, 2000

- Letter to Hope from Robert E. Lee, 17 April 1866
- Sketch of the Right Wing of Battle of Bull Run (undated)
- Letter to Hope from Frederick E. Church (undated)
- Letter to Hope from Redfield Proctor (Secretary of War under President Benjamin Harrison, 1889-91), September 4, 1889

About Middletown Mineral Springs

- Hemenway, Abby. *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* v. 3, p. 843-44. VHS 944.30 H37
- Advertising for Middletown Spring Waters in *The Household*. v. 3-4, 1870, p. 166 VHS X051 H816 and undated pamphlet VHS *S 615.79 M585m

Priscilla Page
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