

Guide to the Charles Griswold Gurley Merrill Papers

MS 1326



compiled by Diane E. Kaplan and William E. Brown, Jr.

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 1326

CREATOR: Merrill, Charles Griswold Gurley, 1836-1909

TITLE: Charles Griswold Gurley Merrill papers

DATES: 1854-1872

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.5 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers consist of diaries, letters, and miscellanea documenting Charles Griswold Gurley Merrill's voyages as a seaman on the ship *Merrimac* and experiences as a Union army surgeon, including command of black troops, during the Civil War. Also included is an essay describing the papers, written by one of Merrill's descendants.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1326>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1326>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Transferred from the Yale University Medical Historical Library, 1980.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Charles Griswold Gurley Merrill Papers (MS 1326). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

CHARLES GRISWOLD GURLEY MERRILL, 1836-1909

Charles Griswold Gurley Merrill, son of David Jackman Merrill (B.A. Yale 1827), who was for over twenty years a druggist in Newburyport, Mass., was born in that city, July 27, 1836. His mother was Ann M. (Titcomb) Merrill. He entered the class the last term of Freshman year.

After graduation from college he studied a year in the Medical School, and was then Acting Assistant Surgeon United States Army, at Nashville, Tenn., receiving his formal appointment to the position January 21, 1863, after completing his course in the Yale Medical School. December 21, 1863, he was appointed Surgeon of the 22nd Regiment, United States Colored Troops, which soon afterward became part of the 18th Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, and shared in various movements of the siege of Petersburg and capture of Richmond. The regiment later took part in the obsequies of President Lincoln and the pursuit of his assassin. He then went with the regiment to Texas and remained there till November 20, 1865, when he was mustered out of service.

Since then he had lived in New Haven, Conn., and was for nearly twenty years a gauger in the Internal Revenue Service. In 1889 he became bookkeeper for F. S. Porter, then a wholesale liquor dealer, and retired early in 1909 after a service of twenty years. He devoted considerable time to the study of modern languages, and for several years taught a night school for the city.

Mr. Merrill died at his home in New Haven, September 23, 1909. He was 73 years of age.

He married in New Haven, May 23, 1865, Georgia A., daughter of Charles and Mary Kinney, and had three daughters, of whom the second died in 1872. The youngest daughter is the wife of Edward Chauncey Baldwin, Ph.D. (B.A. Yale 1895), Professor in the University of Illinois.

From: *Yale Obituary Record*, 1909-1910.

Scope and Contents

The Charles Griswold Gurley Merrill Papers consist of diaries and letters documenting Charles Merrill's brief career as a seaman and his later experiences as a Union army officer and surgeon during the Civil War. The papers also include an essay which contains transcripts of original material.

Before enrolling in the Yale College class of 1861 Merrill served as a seaman on the ship *Merrimac*. His diary (folder 2) records his duties on two voyages. The first voyage, in 1854, sailed from the St. Lawrence to

London and Bremerhaven and back to North America. The second voyage, eighteen months later, sailed from New York to New Orleans. After the second voyage, in 1856, Merrill quit the seafaring life. One letter and a recommendation from Merrill's captain (folder 3) also document this period. Folder 18 contains autographs from Merrill's Yale class album. This is the only material which documents Merrill's education. The papers contain no record of Merrill's medical studies at Yale.

The papers for Merrill's Civil War career begin in January, 1863, when Merrill signed a three-year contract as a private physician with the Union army. Letters to his parents and sister describe the journey to Nashville and the military and medical conditions prevailing there. After his contract expired Merrill remained in Nashville with the military police. Subsequently he decided to return home following an attack of pneumonia in July. Letters from Merrill's father, David J. Merrill, to his family in Newburyport, Massachusetts describe Charles' condition and travel plans.

Merrill returned to military service after regaining his health. Having chosen to apply for a commission in a black regiment, he reported for duty in January, 1864. Letters (folders 5-11) and a diary (folder 2) from the period recount the regiment's assignment to Yorktown, Virginia and its participation in the siege of Petersburg with the Army of the Potomac. Many letters concern Merrill's precarious financial circumstances, and occasional ones, particularly those of March 29 and August 2, 1864, describe in graphic detail the life of an army surgeon. Merrill's letters also describe his assignments during the siege of Richmond. Letters beginning in November describe the digging of the Dutch Gap Canal. In April, 1865, following the taking of Richmond, the regiment was ordered to Washington to march in the Lincoln funeral ceremonies and then to hunt for Lincoln's assassins. In May the regiment was ordered to Brownsville, Texas and there Merrill was mustered out of the service. His letters and diaries from Texas are highly critical of the conditions for soldiers at this southern outpost. Items in folder 20 include miscellaneous war memorabilia, including letters and confederate printed matter, which might have been saved as souvenirs of battle. The papers contain only a few scattered letters written by Merrill after the war.

Also included in the papers are transcripts of the wartime letters and the 1865 diary (folders 14-18) and a long essay (folder 13) about Merrill's life and the papers, presumably written by one of Merrill's descendants. Although the transcripts are not complete they do include material not available in its original form, including copies of articles Merrill wrote about his wartime experiences for the Newburyport *Daily Herald*.

Collection Contents

Inventory, 1854-1872

b. 1, f. 1	Diaries	1854 June-Sep, 1856 Mar, 1865
b. 1, f. 2	Diary	1865
b. 1, f. 3-12	Correspondence	1856, 1861-1872
b. 1, f. 13-18	Typescripts	1863-1865
b. 1, f. 19	Yale University. Class of 1861-autograph sheets from class album	1861
b. 1, f. 20	Miscellanea	1861-1865

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Medicine
Physicians
Seafaring life

Geographic Names

Petersburg (Va.) -- Seige, 1864-1865
Richmond (Va.) -- Siege, 1864-1865
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
-- African American troops
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
-- Medical care

Genres / Formats

Diaries

Occupations

Seamen
Soldiers

Names

Merrill, Charles Griswold Gurley, 1836-1909

Corporate Bodies

United States. Army of the Potomac
Yale College (1718-1887). Class of 1861