

# Guide to the Walter A. Chapman papers

MS 892



July 2008

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 892

**CREATOR:** Chapman, Walter A., d. 1865

**TITLE:** Walter A. Chapman papers

**DATES:** 1856-1865

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 0.25 linear feet

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Letters and diary of Walter A. Chapman (1840-1865) describing his experience as a member of the 36th regiment, his participation in numerous battles (1862-1864), and the hardships of camp life due to shortages of food, clothing, and medicines. In 1864 he became lieutenant of a brigade of black troops and describes their conduct in a battle at Blakely, Alabama in April, 1865. The diary covers the period January, 1863 to March, 1864.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0892>

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## 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.0892>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](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

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of S. W. Chapman, 1944.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

Walter A. Chapman Papers (MS 892). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Scope and Contents

The Civil War letters and diary of Walter A. Chapman (1840-1865) make up the bulk of this collection and detail the experiences of the common soldiers in the Union Army, chronically short of food and clothing, suffering from a battery of illnesses and lack of medical aid, bitter against politicians and their prolongation of the war, but fervent partisans of their officers and fellow soldiers.

In September of 1862 Walter Chapman, of Charlestown, Massachusetts, joined the 36th Regiment of the Massachusetts Volunteers, which served under General Burnside through Grant's western campaign of 1862-1864. In these years Chapman fought and described the fighting at Fredericksburg, Champion's Hill, Black River, Vicksburg, Campbell's Station, Knoxville, the Battle of the Wilderness, and others. He recorded at the same time in a lively fashion his life in camp and on campaign, and his daily foraging and other means of supplementing his inadequate diet and wardrobe, and his opinions, of the conduct of the war. His diary includes a list of prices for clothing and equipment in camp in 1862, and he makes frequent note of the price of food and other necessities.

Chapman was sent home in March of 1864 on recruiting service and afterwards rejoined the army, serving as sergeant and later lieutenant in a brigade of black troops fighting in the deep south. At first sceptical about the troops, after battles such as that at Blakely, Alabama, in April of 1865, he was convinced that the black soldier "has shown himself, on the battlefield, to be the equal of the best soldiers that ever stepped" (1865 Apr 16).

Chapman was killed on May 25, 1865, in an explosion of a warehouse in Mobile, Alabama.

Aside from his letters and diary, Chapman's Civil War papers include a newspaper clipping of his letter to his parents about the siege of Knoxville and a list of battles fought by the 36th Regiment and a list of the men in his company. Also in the collection are a few 1859 letters from a Charlestown friend discussing local news, a poem and essay about religion written by Chapman, and several receipts and other miscellaneous items.

These papers were donated to Yale University by S. W. Chapman in 1944.

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## Collection Contents

### Original accession

b. 1, f. 1-11	Correspondence A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1859, 1862-1865
b. 1, f. 12	Diary	1863 January-1864 March
b. 1, f. 13	Poem	1861?
b. 1, f. 13	Essay on religion	1861?
b. 1, f. 14	Newspaper clipping of letter about the siege of Knoxville	1864 January 30
b. 1, f. 14	List of battles of the 36th Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, and list of men in W.A.C.'s company	[1865]
b. 1, f. 15	Receipts	1856, 1860
b. 1, f. 15	Miscellaneous	1859

## **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**

African American soldiers

### **Geographic Names**

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

-- Campaigns

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

-- Participation, African American

### **Genres / Formats**

Diaries

### **Occupations**

Soldiers

### **Names**

Chapman, Walter A., d. 1865

### **Corporate Body**

United States. Army. Massachusetts Infantry

Regiment, 36th (1862-1865)