

**Horace Tracy Hanks  
Papers, 1861-1895****SC14009**

**QUANTITY:** 1 box (0.25 cubic ft.)  
**ACCESS:** Open to research  
**ACQUISITION:** Purchase; Romaine, December 12, 1957  
**PROCESSED BY:** Nicholas Webb, Student Assistant, State University of New York at Albany, June 2008

**Biographical Note:**

Horace Tracy Hanks, a Civil War regimental surgeon who would go on to become one of America's pioneering gynecologists, was born on June 27, 1837, in East Randolph, Vt. He graduated from Albany Medical College in 1861.

In the summer of 1862 Hanks became acting assistant surgeon to the Thirtieth New York Volunteers and was assigned to duty at the Armory Square Hospital in Washington, D.C., where he treated soldiers who had been wounded at the Second Battle of Bull Run. In October he was ordered to Frederick, Md., where he served in a hospital camp, and from there he traveled with his regiment to Virginia, where they fought at the Battle of Fredericksburg. In the early months of 1863 he served briefly as surgeon to the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Sharpshooters, but by May 1863 he had returned to the Thirtieth Volunteers, with whom he crossed the Rappahannock River when they attacked Fredericksburg a second time during the Battle of Chancellorsville.

In the summer of 1863 Hanks was honorably discharged from the army and returned to the full-time practice of medicine. In 1865, after a brief stint as a physician in Royalston, Mass., he moved to New York City, where he would live and practice for the rest of his life.

In 1864 Hanks married Martha L. ("Mattie") Fisk of East Bethel, Vt., with whom he had corresponded during his military service. She died in 1868; the couple's only child died in 1874. In 1872 he married Julia Dana Godfrey, a native of Keene, N.H., with whom he had three children.

Hanks chose gynecology as his surgical specialty and became a prominent physician in the field, writing several influential journal articles. In 1872 he was appointed attending physician and surgeon at the DeMilt Dispensary, where he served for ten years. In 1885 he was appointed Professor of the Diseases of Women at the Post-Graduate Medical School, and in 1889 he became chief surgeon at the Women's Hospital. He was a member of numerous medical organizations and served for two years as president of the New York County Medical Society. In addition, he was active in religious and philanthropic causes as a deacon of the Madison Avenue Baptist Church and as president of the Baptist Social Union. He died in New York City on November 19, 1900.

### Scope and Content Note:

The papers of Horace Tracy Hanks relate chiefly to his service as a surgeon in the army during the Civil War. They include letters sent by Hanks to his future wife, Mattie Fiske, that describe the Northern Virginia campaigns of 1862-1863. The letters describe the Battles at Bull Run (2<sup>nd</sup>), Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville (during which Hanks's regiment was part of the second attack on Fredericksburg.) Many letters also describe his experience of working in an army hospital camp along with personal comments regarding the horrors of war.

These papers also contain other materials related to Hanks' service as an army surgeon, including rosters of wounded soldiers and their injuries and Hanks' various assignment orders.

A smaller assortment of papers documents Hanks's post-war career. These items include letters of recommendation, his 1876 letter of appointment as a deacon to Madison Avenue Baptist Church, numerous letters informing Hanks of his receipt of various professional honors (including the vice presidency of the New York Academy of Medicine), and an undated pamphlet by Hanks on the subject of using saline injections to prevent shock.

The collection also includes two Civil War-era letters from Mattie Fiske's brother, William L. Fiske, to his family in Vermont.

### Container List:

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	Correspondence – 1861 (1 item) A.L.S., 6 July 1861, Richmond, Vermont, to Mattie Fiske. Personal letter.
1	2	Correspondence – 1862 (14 items) a) A.L.S., 30 March 1862, Albany Hospital, Albany, N.Y., to Mattie Fiske. Personal letter. b) A.L.S., 7 September 1862, Armory Square Hospital, Washington, D.C., to Mattie Fiske. Discusses his experience treating soldiers wounded during “the Friday and Saturday battles” [Second Bull Run?]. c) A.L.S., 13 September 1862, Armory Square Hospital, Washington, D.C., to “Dear Brother.” Discusses his experiences as a medical officer at the Armory Square Hospital. d) A.L.S., 6 October 1862, Armory Square Hospital, Washington, D.C., to Mattie Fiske. Describes a visit to the Navy Yard to see the <i>Monitor</i> . e) A.L.S., 19 October 1862, Washington, D.C., to Mattie Fiske. Describes a visit to see the 12 <sup>th</sup> Vermont Regiment, which includes people he knows from his hometown. He has been ordered to proceed immediately to Frederick, Md. f) A.L.S., 2 November 1862, U.S. General Hospital Camp B, Frederick, Md., to Mattie Fiske. Hanks reflects on the horrors of war and describes hearing “the distant booming of cannon.” g) A.L.S., 17 November 1862, U.S. General Hospital Camp B, Frederick, Md., to Mattie Fiske. Discusses life in the hospital camp, which is full of “profanity and intemperance.”

Box	Folder	Description
		<p>h) A.L.S., 22 November 1862, Armory Square Hospital, Washington, D.C., to Mattie Fiske, East Bethel, Vt. Hanks is back in Washington <i>en route</i> to Fredericksburg, Va., where he will be serving under General Burnside.</p> <p>i) A.L.S., 26 November 1862, “camp near Brooks Station between Aquia Creek and Falmouth, Va.,” to Mattie Fiske. Hanks has arrived in camp.</p> <p>j) A.L.S., 7 December 1862, Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment New York State Volunteers, camp near Brooks Station, Va., to Mattie Fiske. Describes the morning routine in camp and reflects on the horrors of war.</p> <p>k) A.L.S., 11 December 1862, “opposite Fredericksburg, Va.,” to Mattie Fiske. Briefly describes the building of a pontoon bridge to cross the Rappahannock while Confederate sharpshooters fire from the opposite bank.</p> <p>l) A.L.S., 16 December 1862, “opposite Fredericksburg, Va.,” to Mattie Fiske. Describes the Battle of Fredericksburg and the Union retreat over the Rappahannock.</p> <p>m) A.L.S., 26 December 1862, Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment New York State Volunteers, camp near Belle Plain Landing, Va., to “Dear Parents.” Describes the high morale of the army despite the defeat at Fredericksburg. This letter is missing its second half.</p> <p>n) A.L.S., 26 December 1862, Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment New York State Volunteers, camp near Belle Plain Landing, Va., to Mattie Fiske. Discusses life in camp and the strategic significance of the Battle of Fredericksburg.</p>
1	3	<p>Correspondence – 1863 (12 items)</p> <p>a) A.L.S., 1 January 1863, Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment New York State Volunteers, camp near Belle Plain Landing, Va., to Mattie Fiske. New Year’s reflections about the meaning of the war and the importance of the struggle to free the slaves.</p> <p>b) A.L.S., 13 January 1863, Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment New York State Volunteers, near Belle Plain Landing, Va., to Mattie Fiske. Describes the food in camp and discusses news from home.</p> <p>c) A.L.S., 19 January 1863, Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment New York State Volunteers, near Belle Plain Landing, Va., to Mattie Fiske. Discusses the low morale of the troops, who will be marching the following morning. Hanks has been transferred to become surgeon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Sharpshooters.</p> <p>d) A.L.S., 22 January 1863, Headquarters, 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Sharpshooters, “back and above Falmouth, Va.,” to Mattie Fiske. A brief note. The Sharpshooters have been on the move, but rain is making the roads impassible.</p> <p>e) A.L.S., 3 May 1863, “in the field near U.S. Ford,” to Mattie Fiske. Describes crossing the Rappahannock river in preparation for an attack on Fredericksburg.</p> <p>f) A.L.S., 4 May 1863, to Mattie Fiske. A brief note. Hanks’s regiment has not yet been engaged, although firing continued throughout the night.</p> <p>g) A.L.S., 8 May 1863, Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteers, “in the field near White Oak Church,” to Mattie Fiske. A long, detailed letter which Hanks explains he has copied from his personal journal. Describes the events of April 28<sup>th</sup> through May 7<sup>th</sup>, during which Hanks crossed the Rappahannock as part of the Union attack on Fredericksburg during the Battle of Chancellorsville.</p>

Box	Folder	Description
		<p>h) A.L.S., 10 May 1863, "near White Oak Church," to Mattie Fiske. Describes the aftermath of the attack on Fredericksburg and talks about a number of literary pieces in the <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>.</p> <p>i) A.L.S., 18 May 1863, Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment, New York State Volunteers, camp near White Oak Church, Va., to Mattie Fiske. Hanks describes receiving a letter from an old classmate who is now a surgeon with the 8<sup>th</sup> Alabama Regiment on the other side of the Rappahannock. (This letter has split into several fragments.)</p> <p>j) A.L.S., 2 June 1863, Saratoga, N.Y., to Mattie Fiske. Hanks is on his way back from the front and hopes to be mustered out soon.</p> <p>k) A.L.S., 8 June 1863, Albany, N.Y., to Mattie Fiske. Hanks is in Albany, waiting to be mustered out. He describes visits to New York City and to the Cohoes Falls.</p> <p>l) A.L.S., 30 July 1863, South Royalston, Mass., to Mattie Fiske. A personal letter. Hanks has arrived at his new job in South Royalston.</p>
1	4	Financial Correspondence – 1895, n.d. (2 items)
1	5	"Intravenous Injection of Normal Saline Solution" (Pamphlet, inscribed) – n.d.
1	6	Letter of Appointment as Deacon, Madison Avenue Baptist Church – 1876 (1 item)
1	7	Letters of Recommendation – 1863, 1870 (2 items)
1	8	Medical Honors – 1870-1894
1	9	Military Hospital Records – 1862-1863
1	10	Military Orders and Discharge Papers – 1862-1863
1	11	South Royalston, Massachusetts, Correspondence – 1864, 1866 (2 items)
1	12	Transcribed Poem ("The Empty Sleeve"); woodcut-printed envelope fragment[?]; unidentified letter – n.d.
1	13	<p>William L. Fiske – Correspondence – 1863, 1865 (2 items)</p> <p>a) A.L.S., 30 November 1863, Hammond Hospital, Beaufort, N.C., to "my Dear Parents, Brothers and Sisters," [East Bethel, Vt.?] Fiske, recovering in an Army hospital, describes his injuries and illnesses, talks about life in the hospital, and hopes that he will some day be able to return to Vermont.</p> <p>b) A.L.S., 17 May 1865, Kinston, N.C., to "Brother &amp; Sister," [East Bethel, Vt.?] Briefly discusses the situation in North Carolina after the fall of the Confederacy.</p>

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