

**Jerry Smith
Letters, 1861-1865****SC22573**

QUANTITY: 1 box (0.25 cubic ft.)
ACCESS: Open to research
ACQUISITION: Purchase: Charles Apfelbaum, Rare Manuscripts & Archives, June 2000
PROCESSED BY: Jasmine Bumpers, Student Assistant, State University of New York at Albany, June 2011

Biographical Note:

Jeremiah (Jerry) Smith was born in March 1844 in Worcester (Otsego County), New York. He was the son of Mrs. Mary Watson and had at least one brother, Ingraham, and one sister, Elizabeth, whom he commonly referred to as Libby.

After the Civil War broke out, Smith decided to join the Union Army, believing he would have been drafted anyway. He enlisted on October 1, 1861, at Worcester, and shortly thereafter mustered in as a private with Company I of the 51st New York Infantry Regiment. After completing the required two years of service, Smith re-enlisted on December 1, 1863, and remained with the same regiment and company until he was mustered out on July 25, 1865. During his time of service, Smith participated in many battles throughout North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and Mississippi. After he was discharged, Smith returned to Worcester.

Scope and Content Note:

This collection consists of letters Jerry Smith sent to his mother, Mary Watson; his sister, Libby Smith; and brother, Ingraham P. Smith, regarding his experiences of military service during the Civil War.

Smith's letters shed light on the Battle of Roanoke Island (February 1862) and Battle of Vicksburg (July 1863), both of which were considered significant victories for the Union Army. The Battle of Roanoke Island led to Union Army control of Albemarle and Pamlico sounds while the Union Army seizure of Vicksburg is often viewed as a turning point in the war, as it resulted in control of the Mississippi River.

Smith's letters also detail a soldier's life. He writes that many of his comrades suffered from sunstroke and that he supplemented his earnings by taking care of officers' horses. His letters also provide details of where the 51st Regiment was stationed and its movement from one place to another.

In addition to describing battles and other happenings, Jerry Smith's letters also reveal some of his innermost thoughts, such as his regret over having enlisted ("If I was out of it, you wouldn't catch me enlisting again") and his fear that the war would never be settled.

Box and Folder list:

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	Letter to mother, October 28, 1861. Smith writes about his reason for enlisting and about his regiment.
1	2	Letter to brother, February, 1862. Smith writes about the defeat of the Confederates at Roanoke Island, North Carolina.
1	3	Letter to brother, June 18, 1862. After learning that Ingraham wants to enlist, Smith urges his brother not to follow in his footsteps.
1	4	Letter to an unknown recipient.
1	5	Letter to sister, February 18, 1863. Smith encourages Libby to go to school, writes of his fondness of Newport News, and about Ingraham deciding to enlist despite his warnings.
1	6	Letter to sister, April 26, 1863. Smith gives his sister an update on his whereabouts and writes about the possible consolidation of his regiment.
1	7	Letter to mother, May 18, 1863. Smith writes about church and his fears that the war will never end,
1	8	Letter to sister, June 19, 1863. Note.
1	9	Letter to brother, July 1, 1863. Smith writes about the Vicksburg campaign, its aftermath and his hopes of returning to Kentucky.
1	10	Letter to mother, July 18, 1863. Smith writes about the Battle of Vicksburg and how many of the men in his regiment have suffered from sunstroke.
1	11	Letter to sister, August 23, 1863. Smith expresses his happiness in hearing that that Libby is in school and tells her how he earns extra money by taking care of the officers' horses.
1	12	Letter to mother, September 20, 1863. Note.
1	13	Letter to sister and mother, October 28, 1863. Smith writes about how sorry he was to hear that Ingraham was in bad health and promises to send some money to Libby soon.
1	14	Letter to mother, November 4, 1863. Smith writes that he hopes his regiment will soon be able to return home.
1	15	Letter to sister, March 2, 1864. Smith writes that his furlough went by far too quickly and how he hopes the next time he returns home it will be for good.
1	16	Letter to sister, March 8, 1864. Note to his sister Libby.
1	17	Letter to mother, August 5, 1864. Smith very briefly describes an attack on Petersburg.
1	18	Letter to mother, November 10, 1864. Smith apologizes to his mother for not writing to her more often and how he hopes Abraham Lincoln will be elected president.
1	19	Letter to mother, July 3, 1865. Note.

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