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Hiram Hill Collins papers

Title: Hiram Hill Collins papers
Collection No: MSS.351
Extent: 0.25 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1857-1988

Abstract: The collection comprises mainly letters written by Hiram Hill Collins (1823-1915) to his wife and family at home in DeSoto County, Mississippi, while he served in the Confederate artillery in Georgia and Alabama during the last years of the Civil War.

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Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
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Biographical information

Hiram Hill Collins was born in Rockingham, North Carolina on August 23, 1823, though his father, Jones Collins (b.1801), and mother, Margaret Tune Collins, were originally from Virginia. Jones moved with his family to Memphis, Tennessee, about 1838 and then to DeSoto County, Mississippi. In 1850, Hiram married Mary Ann Parker Hannaford (1833-1924) who was born in Halifax County, North Carolina. Her father, Joseph Wise Hannaford (1793-1848) was from Virginia and moved his family to Shelby County, Tennessee, and then DeSoto County. Hiram worked as a farmer and postmaster in the Lewisburg area near Cockrum. He joined the Confederate army in 1863 and served in the 14th Battalion, Mississippi Light Artillery. Hiram died on May 8, 1915 and was buried in Olive Branch, Mississippi.

Scope and contents

The collection includes a few pre- and post-Civil War documents, but the bulk of the collection is made up of letters written by Hiram Hill Collins to his wife and family at home in DeSoto County, Mississippi, while he served in the Confederate artillery in Georgia and Alabama during the last years of the war. In his letters, Collins expresses his loneliness and his fear for the welfare of his family, and also comments on conditions in the field.

Two letters, 1857 and 1859, to Collins from his uncle, G.W. Collins, and cousin, L.A. Collins, both of Hart County, Kentucky, pass along family news and comment on conditions in their locale. A letter of 1883 by Collins asks the assistance of Colonel C.H. Causey of Suffolk, Virginia, in the settlement of the estate of his wife’s relatives. Finally, a pedigree chart of George G. Collins (b. 1952) traces his ancestry back four generations (Collins-Tune and Hannaford-Ellis families).

Provenance

The collection was donated by Mrs. Rogers Parker (1906-1998) who for many years was a professor in the University of Memphis Speech and Drama Department where she was better known as Betty May Collins.

Subject terms

Collins, Hiram Hill, 1823-1915.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder 1

Family news: deaths, marriages, speculation as to the whereabouts of siblings, and “…thanks be to the Lord I am yet alive and well although I have lost my first companion and the daughter of our love….”

   Family news and addresses; “…the men and women are doing rather bad here of late for to narrow a man to to be hung at Munfordville for killing his wife I don’t know what this world is coming to (or rather the people that is in the world) The cars are running from Louisville to Munfordville I think some of you all might come to see us…”

   “I have a very bad chance to write to you as we have no mail I have to catch my chance and send it some one passing….if you have a school you would do well to send Ben and Harvey to school as I don’t think they will do much good at home…”

4. 1864 August 1. H.H. Collins, Atlanta, Ga., to Mary Collins.
   “I have a chance to send a letter to granada perhaps it will be forwarded to you from there…I am indeed uneasy about Jim Tuckers Brigade was in a heavy fight the 28th inst in which I learn that the Brigade was awfully cut up…you might think it was an easy matter to see each other being in the same army but it is a hard matter even to get a letter from each other the lines of battle being some 6 or 8 miles long….I have not been out of hearing of cannon for 82 days…”

   Has received nothing from home and does not know if his letters are getting there. “I left home in April McLendons company proceed to demopolis Ala, thence General Polk detailed myself with 22 others to Hoskins battery we then proceed to Rome ga, where we fell in with General Johnson army retreating from Dalton and have finally made a stand at Atlanta we have been here 37 days….we have had a very hard campaign and have lost a great many men out of a squad of 23 men detailed we have 7 left but one killed dead the balance sick and wounded gone to the hospital….I think it would be good idea to sow a good deal of wheat this fall I must close for want of paper this sheet cost me 50 cts and the envelope 25 cts….”

6. 1864 September (?). H.H. Collins to Mary Collins. [damaged letter]
   “You would perhaps like to know how I was off for clothing I have aplenty of cloths except socks….I have not been out of hearing of cannon from 17th of may untill the 27th of august….we have had four days of peace that we have not heard a cannon but we are expecting Sherman to turn up some where else soon and perhaps the hardest fighting is yet to do….I will tell you a little circumstance that occurred to me the other day in the evening late my mess and self was cooking supper while a few Stray balls was flying and me thought I heard you say do not Stay out here and expose yourself unnecessary and but a few minutes one bal passed near one of my messmates head….September the 9th, 1864, In camp near lovejoy Station on the Georgia R.R. 25 miles south of Atlanta. Mary Since the within was written we have had to Evacuate Atlanta and the Yankies now hold possession of it….we now have some prospect of getting back to our company which is at Selma Ala our Capt has made application for us….”

   “I was pleased to learn from Leannah letter you had your children was all going to School that was large enough….I am again with my own company…[Brother James] told me that he was looking for a letter from home soon by wises negro….I am nearly barefooted and bareheaded but I reck I will get some clothing before long the nights is getting a little cool now…”

   “I want to know if filly has brought you a colt this Spring and how your hogs are looking and how Benton and Hearvey are behaving their Selves…”

10. 1864 October 31. H.H. Collins, Opelika, Ala., to Mary Collins. Written on ledger sheet headed ‘Account of Freight Received at Western & Atlantic Rail-Road, from Georgia Rail-Road’. Has received August and September letters from home. “Several of the company has applied for furlows and has been disapproved…. [to sons] obey your mother Strictly and be a dutiful boy…. I hope Soon to have the pleasure to Shake your little hands…. be good and kind to your mother and your father will love you A due my boys for the present”

11. 1864 November 5. H.H. Collins, Opelika, Ala., to Mary Collins. On Western & Atlantic Rail-Road sheet. “…have been to preaching several times I have drawn me a very nice bible which the government furnish to all the company that wants one we draw nearly every thing for our comfort and convenience from the government I have not drew any money yet…. ”

12. 1864 November 28. H.H. Collins, Opelika, Ala., to Mary Collins. On Western & Atlantic Rail-Road sheet. “…we have tolerable good cabbins but little to eat drill twice a day at 10 and at 3 o’clock…. ”

13. 1865 February 2. H.H. Collins, Opelika, Ala., to Mary Collins. “…we have many rumors afloat now about peace I do not know that there is any confidence in the reports or not.”

14. 1865 February 14. H.H. Collins, Headquarters, Merrin’s Mississippi Battery, leave request. “I respectfully ask your attention to the following circumstances I have a wife who is in feeble health and Seven little children the oldest of which is but Eleven years of age that are wholly dependant on my labor for a support I have not been at home in Twelve months and being informed of their destitute condition and that my presance was absolutely necessary to make some provision to support them this year I respectfully ask that I may be allowed a furlough of 30 days to go to my home near Senatobia in Desoto county Miss to make provision for them the present year so that I may be able to do my duty to my country without the reflection on my mind that my family are suffering for the real necessaries of life. Respectfully…” On the reverse of the document are approvals and endorsements for 30 days furlough by officers up to the Departmental Commander Lieutenant General Richard Taylor’s Assistant Adjutant General.


Folder 2

Photocopies of the collection materials.