

Henry L. Abbot Family

A Register of Its Papers in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Michael Spangler



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

2004

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Collection Summary

Title: Henry L. Abbot Family Papers

Span Dates: 1770-2001

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1832-1870)

ID No.: MSS84936

Creator: Abbot, Henry L.

Extent: 2,000 items; 9 containers plus 3 artifact containers and 1 oversize; 5.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Correspondence, memoirs, diaries, writings, photographs, legal and financial records, genealogical material, military records, printed matter, and mementos primarily documenting the professional and family activities of Henry L. Abbot and his family during the Civil War.

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.

Names:

Abbot, Henry L.

Abbot, Edward Stanley, 1841-1863

Abbot, Fanny Larcom, 1807-1883--Correspondence

Abbot, Frederic V. (Frederic Vaughan), 1858-1928

Abbot, Jos. Hale (Joseph Hale), 1802-1873--Correspondence

Abbot, Mary Susan Everett, 1832-1871--Correspondence

Everett, Emily, b. 1799

Grant, Ulysses S. (Ulysses Simpson), 1822-1885

Larcom, Henry, 1777-1862

Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865

McClellan, George Brinton, 1826-1885

Seward, William Henry, 1801-1872--Correspondence

Abbott family--Correspondence

United States. Army--Ordnance and ordnance stores

United States. Army. Corps of Engineers

United States. President (1861-1865 : Lincoln). Emancipation Proclamation

Margaret (Ship)

Subjects:

Bull Run, 1st Battle of, Va., 1861

Fortification--Washington (D.C.)--History--19th century

Gettysburg, Battle of, Gettysburg, Pa., 1863

Napoleonic Wars, 1800-1815

Peninsular Campaign, 1862

Cambridge (Mass.)--Social life and customs--19th century

Massachusetts--History--Civil War, 1861-1865

Petersburg (Va.)--History--Siege, 1864-1865

Richmond (Va.)--History--Siege, 1864-1865

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

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

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

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Participation, African American

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

United States--Politics and government--1861-1865

Virginia--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Campaigns

Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs--19th century

Occupations:

Army officers

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of the Henry L. Abbot family were given to the Library of Congress by Roger Anderson in 2002. Additional material was purchased in 2003.

Transfers:

Daguerreotypes, prints, an oil painting, and most photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of these papers.

Copyright Status:

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of members of the Henry L. Abbot family is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Henry L. Abbot Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Henry L. Abbot

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1831, Aug. 13	Born, Beverly, Mass.
1854	Graduated second in his class, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.
1854-1855	Second lieutenant, United States Corps of Topographical Engineers, Office of Pacific Railroad Explorations, Washington, D.C.
1855	Assisted in railroad survey in California and Oregon
1856	Married Mary Susan Everett (died 1871)
1857	First lieutenant, United States Corps of Topographical Engineers
1857-1861	Assisted Captain Andrew A. Humphreys on survey of the Mississippi River delta and coauthored their <i>Report upon the Physics and Hydraulics of the Mississippi River</i> (1861)
1861-1862	Assistant topographical engineer, staff of General Irvin McDowell, United States Army Wounded at the First Battle of Bull Run, Va. Assisted General John G. Barnard, chief engineer for the Department of Washington, in constructing forts south of the Potomac River Aide-de-camp to General Barnard in the Peninsular Campaign, Va. Chief topographical engineer for Major General Nathaniel Banks's expedition to New Orleans, La.

1863-1865	Colonel, First Connecticut Artillery, United States Volunteers, in defense of Washington, D.C. Captain, Corps of Engineers, United States Army Commanded siege artillery for United States armies operating against Petersburg and Richmond, Va.
1865	Mustered out of the volunteer service with brevet rank of major general and returned to regular duty in the Corps of Engineers with rank of major
1866-1886	Colonel, Corps of Engineers, United States Army
1888-1895	Member, Board of Ordnance and Fortifications, United States Department of War
1895	Retired from active service
1897-1904	Member, technical committee, and consulting engineer, La Compagnie Nouvelle du Canal de Panama (New Panama Canal Co.)
1904	Brigadier general, United States Army, retired, by Act of Congress
1905-1906	Member, board of consulting engineers appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt to prepare plans for the Panama Canal
1905-1910	Professor of hydraulic engineering, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
1927, Oct. 1	Died, Cambridge, Mass.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of the family of Henry Larcom Abbot (1831-1927) span the years 1770-2001, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1832-1870. Correspondence, diaries, memoirs, military records, financial and legal records, genealogical material, photographs, writings, clippings, and mementos comprise the major part of the collection. The material is arranged alphabetically by type of material or name of creator and chronologically thereunder. Artifacts and oversize material are arranged and described according to the containers and folders from which the items were removed.

Correspondence, diaries, and memoirs of Henry L. Abbot and other family members constitute the core of the collection. Most of the letters were exchanged between Abbot and his wife, Mary Susan (“Susie”) Everett Abbot, and mother, Fanny Larcom Abbot, and reflect primarily his service in the Union army and family and social activities in Massachusetts during the Civil War. A graduate of the United States Military Academy and a career officer in the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Abbot served as a topographical engineer and Union officer throughout the war and earned numerous promotions. He was wounded at the First Battle of Bull Run, assisted with the design and construction of fortifications around the city of Washington, and served in the Peninsular Campaign. In 1863, he was commissioned colonel commanding the First Connecticut Artillery volunteers and led the siege artillery for the Union armies operating against Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia, in 1864-1865. In his letters, Abbot discreetly described movements of the army, concerns about Abraham Lincoln’s administration, African-American soldiers, religion, and Union commanders. His caution was due not only to military exigencies but also to his wife’s admonitions concerning his political differences with her family, apparently ardent abolitionists, who also had access to his letters. Abbot wrote of his achievements and occasionally of the technology of the ordnance he commanded such as larger projectiles that weighed as “much as the cannon of ten years ago.” In a letter dated July 16, 1864, his father Joseph Hale Abbot, a mathematics professor and school principal in Beverly, Massachusetts, discussed causes of the war, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, Ulysses S. Grant’s situation in Virginia, and the presidential aspirations of General George McClellan.

Letters from Henry L. Abbot’s mother and wife focus on family matters and the childhood activities of his son Frederic V. Abbot. Letters also discuss the death of Abbot’s brother Edward Stanley Abbot in action at Gettysburg in 1863 and social

receptions in Washington, D.C., in the 1850s, including a description of William Wilson Corcoran's greenhouse and gallery of paintings.

Diaries and memoirs in the collection include reminiscences by Emily Everett, Henry L. Abbot's mother-in-law. A resident of Cambridge, Massachusetts, her memoirs span most of the nineteenth century with family vignettes such as helping her grandfather adjust his powdered wigs, town personalities, childhood adventures, births, and deaths. The collection also contains a journal by Abbot's mother recording his childhood development from 1832 to 1840 and photocopies of Abbot's Civil War diaries for 1864-1865, including his detailed index to his diaries now in the Houghton Library of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Mementos, ships logs, maps, and biographical material comprise a file pertaining to Henry Larcom, shipmaster and Abbot's maternal grandfather. Most of the items relate to Larcom's survival of the wreck of the *Margaret* (ship) in the Atlantic Ocean in 1810. Ensnared in the confiscation of American shipping by the French during the Napoleonic Wars, Larcom and his vessel had been detained by French authorities in Naples. Unable to secure release of his vessel or its cargo, Larcom and several other American masters were permitted to return to Massachusetts on the *Margaret*. The ship capsized in a squall in the middle of the Atlantic, and Larcom survived over a month on the open sea before his rescue by a passing vessel. The actions of the crew during the ordeal were questioned by survivors, and several accounts of the incident are in the biographical material. Printed matter includes a recollection of the event by his daughter, Fanny Larcom Abbot, published in 1871. A shawl, rope, and kerchief salvaged by Larcom from the wreck, a pocketknife, a bound nautical volume, a "burning glass," and a wallet comprise the mementos.

Although Henry L. Abbot published extensively in various technical journals and books, only a few of his writings are contained in the collection. His survey of the Mississippi River delta, *Report upon the Physics and Hydraulics of the Mississippi River* coauthored with Andrew A. Humphreys, was translated and reproduced throughout Europe. The collection includes an Italian review of the report with a congratulatory letter from William Henry Seward, secretary of state, and a commemorative centennial reissue by the Corps of Engineers in 1961. An unidentified notebook, ca. 1828, with numerous stories, poems, and commentary is contained among the miscellaneous writings.

Related Materials

In addition to Abbot's diaries and papers held in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, other related material is also at the Oregon Historical Society in Portland.

Arrangement of the Papers

The collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material or name of creator and chronologically thereunder. Artifacts and oversize material are arranged and described according to the containers and folders from which the items were removed.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Biographical material
BOX 1	Abbot, Frederic V., 1922-1928, n.d.
BOX 1	Abbot, Henry L., 1850, 1913-1952, n.d. (2 folders)
BOX 1	Broadsides and certificates, 1865, 1913, 1925 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 1	Clippings, 1850, 1864, 1902-1905, 1923-1992, n.d.
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	1849-1869 (13 folders)
BOX 2	1870-1963, n.d. (4 folders)
BOX 2	Diaries and memoirs
BOX 2	Abbot, Charles Greeley, 1958
BOX 2	Abbot, Fanny Larcom, 1832-1840 (2 folders)
BOX 2	Abbot, Henry L. (photocopies)
BOX 2	Index, 1850-1918
BOX 2	1864 (2 folders)
BOX 3	1865 (2 folders)
BOX 3	Abbot, Marion ("May") Stanley, 1895
BOX 3	Everett, Emily, 1816, 1887-1890, 1905
BOX 3	Miscellaneous
BOX 3	1807, 1844
BOX 4	1949, n.d.
BOX 4	Financial and legal records, 1828, 1849, 1861-1922, 1941-1989 (2 folders)
BOX 4	Genealogy
BOX 4	Notes, 1851-1941, n.d. <i>See also Oversize</i> (2 folders)
BOX 4	Printed matter
BOX 4	1847, 1876
BOX 5	1902, 1906, 1925 (3 folders)
BOX 6	Slave records, 1814
BOX 6	Larcum, Henry
BOX 6	Biographical material, 1817, 1903, 1968, n.d. (2 folders)
BOX 6	Logbook, <i>Betsy</i> (ship), 1800
BOX 6	Lunar observations and journal, <i>Rover</i> (schooner), 1816-1821
BOX 6	Maps, 1981, n.d. <i>See also Oversize</i>

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 6	Mementos, ca. 1810, 1847, n.d. <i>See Artifacts</i>
BOX 6	Miscellany, 1869, n.d.
BOX 6	Navigation notebooks, 1770, 1796 (2 folders)
BOX 6	Printed matter, 1809, 1844, 1871 (2 folders)
BOX 7	Shipping invoices, 1819
BOX 7	Mementos
BOX 7	Lincoln, Abraham, 1865, n.d. <i>See Artifacts</i>
BOX 7	Military insignia and medals, 1865, 1918, n.d. <i>See Artifacts</i>
BOX 7	Military reunions, badges, 1886-1916 <i>See Artifacts</i>
BOX 7	Miscellaneous, 1782, 1872, 1930-1932, n.d. <i>See also Artifacts</i>
BOX 7	Memorials, 1813, 1828, 1847, 1865, 1928-1929
BOX 7	Military records
BOX 7	Abbot, Frederic V., 1919-1920, n.d.
BOX 7	Abbot, Henry L., extracts from <i>The War of the Rebellion</i> re Abbot, 1861-1865
BOX 7	Set I
BOX 7	Set II
BOX 7	Vols. 1-2
BOX 8	Vols. 3-4 and Addenda (3 folders)
BOX 8	<i>History of the First Connecticut Artillery and of the Siege Trains of the Armies Operating against Richmond, 1862-1865</i> , 1893
BOX 8	Miscellaneous
BOX 8	Extract from Board of Engineers report re Fort Carroll, Md., 1864
BOX 8	"Notes on the Status of the Corps of Engineers," 1885
BOX 8	<i>Petersburg National Military Park, Va.</i> , 1951
BOX 9	Writings
BOX 9	Book, <i>Family Letters of General Henry Larcom Abbot</i> , by Catherine C. Abbot
BOX 9	Correspondence and notes, 1928-1994, n.d.
BOX 9	Drawings, n.d.
BOX 9	Photographs, n.d.
BOX 9	Text, 2001
BOX 9	Miscellaneous
BOX 9	Abbot, Charles Greeley, 1930-1966, n.d.
BOX 9	Abbot, Henry L., 1861-1864, 1912, n.d. (3 folders)
BOX 9	Others, ca. 1828, 1840, 1861, 1953, 1960 (2 folders)
BOX 9	Poetry, 1852, 1863, n.d.
BOX VA 1	Artifacts
BOX VA 1	Larcom, Henry
BOX VA 1	Mementos
BOX VA 1	Ca. 1810 (Container 6)
BOX VA 2	1847, n.d. (Container 6) (3 folders)
BOX VA 2	Mementos

Container List

Container

Contents

BOX VA 2	Lincoln, Abraham, 1865, n.d. (Container 7) (2 folders)
BOX VA 2	Military insignia and medals, 1865, 1918, n.d. (Container 7)
BOX VA 3	Military reunions, badges, 1886-1916 (Container 7)
BOX VA 3	Miscellaneous, 1782, 1876, n.d. (Container 7)
BOX OV 1	Oversize
BOX OV 1	Broadsides and certificates, 1865, 1913, 1925 (Container 1)
BOX OV 1	Genealogical notes
BOX OV 1	Miscellaneous
BOX OV 1	Chart, n.d. (Container 4)
BOX OV 1	Larcom, Henry
BOX OV 1	Maps
BOX OV 1	North Atlantic Ocean, 1821 (Container 6)