Finding Aid for the Jennette Dean Spanish American War correspondence collection 2016.017.w.r

Sharon Clairemont
Center for American War Letters Archives
August 16, 2016
Leatherby Libraries
Chapman University
Orange, CA 92866
speccoll@chapman.edu
URL: http://www1.chapman.edu/library/archives/
Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: Center for American War Letters Archives
Title: Jennette Dean Spanish American War correspondence
creator: Orrin Bowen
creator: Fred Bidwell
creator: Frank Ackerman
creator: J.P. Speer
Identifier/Call Number: 2016.017.w.r
Physical Description: 1 Linear Feet(4 folders)
Date (inclusive): 1897-1899
Abstract: This collection contains correspondence received by Jennette Dean from four soldiers during the Spanish American War.
Leatherby Libraries, Special Collections, CAWL Archives
Storage Unit: Spanish American War 1
Storage Unit: 1-4
Content Description
This collection contains correspondence received by Jennette Dean of Girard, Michigan from Orrin Bowen, Company A, 32nd Michigan Volunteer Infantry; Fred Bidwell, Company A, 32nd Michigan Volunteer Infantry; Frank Ackerman, Company A, 1st Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry; and J.P. Speer, Company D, 31st Michigan Volunteer Infantry, during the Spanish American War. All but Ackerman write from posts in the United States, including Camps Desoto, Fernandina in Florida, Eaton in Michigan, and Thomas in Chickamauga, GA. Ackerman writes from Siboney and Santiago de Cuba in Cuba. Jennette Dean was a teacher in Girard and Coldwater, Michigan.
Arrangement
This collection is arranged by author and date. Series 1: Correspondence from Frank Ackerman -- Series 2: Correspondence from Fred Bidwell -- Series 3: Correspondence from Orrin Bowen -- Series 4: Correspondence from J.P. Speer
Conditions Governing Access
This collection is open for research.
Conditions Governing Use
There are no restrictions on the use of this material except where previously copyrighted material is concerned. It is the responsibility of the researcher to obtain all permissions. For further copyright information, please contact the archivist.
Preferred Citation
[Item title, Box number, Folder number], Jennette Dean Spanish American War correspondence (2016.017.w.r), Center for American War Letters Archives, Chapman University, CA.
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Original donor unknown. Legacy collection from Andrew Carroll.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Spanish-American War, 1898
Battle casualties
Military training camps
Military hospitals
Cuba
Florida
Michigan
Sex role
Jennette Dean
Series 1. Correspondence from Frank Ackerman to Jennette Dean 1898-07-01-1898-08-02

Scope and Contents
Frank A. Ackerman, Company A, 1st Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry, writes from a transport ship enroute to Cuba, from Santiago de Cuba and from Siboney, Cuba. In the July 1st letter he describes conditions on the ship, food, and the men in his regiment. In the July 15 letter he writes from "the seaside" near Santiago, but describes being "in the trenches off Santiago" for three days. He tells of 36 hours without food and only rainwater to drink. He describes being shot at but says his regiment did not fire. He tells of American soldiers dropping from Spanish bullets, heat and fever. He describes possible quarantine, camp "covered in dirt and blood," and of soldiers without stationery writing on labels peeled from tomato cans. Ackerman briefly describes the land, the Cuban people, Cuban money and economy. He writes of his longing for good food and for a letter from home. In his August 2 letter Ackerman says he is a volunteer nurse at the Red Cross hospital stationed at Siboney. He says there are over 500 patients in the hospital and that he, like many has had "mountain fever, a sort of malaria." He describes the land around Santiago as furrowed with trenches and rifle pits, the ground covered with cartridges, and most of the city and surrounding towns burned to the ground. He tells of almost losing his tent and most of his possessions at high tide. He laments losing his teaching position and income, expecting not to be home to Michigan before winter. He believes the war will be over soon "if other nations leaves us alone" and that he believes "God is with us and that the Americans are in the right."

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Jennette Dean

Series 2. Correspondence from Fred Bidwell to Jennette Dean 1898-05-27-1898-07-29

Scope and Contents
Fred Bidwell, Company A, 32nd Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry, writes six letters to "Nettie" from camps in Florida. His letter of May 27, 1898, written from Camp Desoto, describes the camp as dirty, dusty and sandy in a palm grove on Tampa Bay. He describes some of the Kentucky and Georgia mountain scenery and Civil War battlefields observed on the train trip to Florida. He tells of "high tone" ladies wearing chameleons on gold chains and of sending chameleons and an alligator back home. He writes he does not care for Florida and "some of the boys said if they owned Florida and Hell they would rent Florida and move to Hell." Bidwell's June 4th letter from Palmetto Beach tells of camp life and daily routine. He says there is plenty of beer and cigars among the men but that she need not worry he will turn from being a Christian gentleman and become "rough." He writes of guard duty, forced marches, pretend captures and sham battles, but also of swimming and fishing during time off and hearing visiting preachers a few times a week. He writes of missing Girard and Coldwater, the romances of friends, and worries all the girls at home will be married before he returns, saying he hasn't "spoken to a woman or a girl in two months." On July 17 he writes of seeing a "boat load of wounded soldiers come in from Santiago. They were a bloody looking lot..." Bidwell's final letter is written from Fernandina, Florida. He tells of the labor of moving camp, of working in the "cook shack," and of the kinds of food available. He acknowledges knowing of Jennette's other Co. A correspondent, (Orrin) Bowen but refuses to discuss him or their relationship.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Jennette Dean
Series 3. Correspondence from Orrin Bowen to Jennette Dean 1897-11-14-1899-02-21

Scope and Contents
Twenty letters from Orrin Bowen, Company A, 32nd Michigan Volunteer Infantry. Bowen's first letter pre-dates the war and he writes to establish a friendship and writes of their teaching jobs and friends in common in Girard and Coldwater. The second letter he writes from training camp and says "This is my third week of soldier life and I do not like it very well, but still, I think it is my duty to be here and I shall stay till the war is over or till I am disabled." Subsequent letters describe camp life in Michigan, travel by train to Florida with descriptions of the Cumberland Mountains, Civil War battle sites, geography of Georgia and Florida. On arrival in Florida he describes the terrain: "It does not seem to be a land of beauty, but low, flat and undesirable to one of Northern breeding (6/4/98). He writes of the abundance of chameleons and alligators and offers to send either to her. His letter of July 7 tells of going to Port Tampa to see the transport ships arrive from Cuba, describes the wounded and their tales of the battle at Santiago made difficult by outdated rifles and Spanish ambushes. "What a shame that this, our glorious country, can't arm its men equal to down-trodden Spain!" Bowen writes of camp life in Florida, dirt and rain, poor food, flooded tents, miserable heat. He writes of his ambition to leave teaching to study law and responds to Dean's dislike of lawyers (7/5/98). He also reponds to her interest in his "moral welfare." Bowen writes about what it must be like to be a girl, how much more fortunate they are because they cannot be soldiers. "One long continued round of pleasure is the idea that I have of a girl's life. She doesn't have to go to war, or work in the field, or in the store, but instead occupies the parlor and receives company." (6/10/98) He writes of the difficulty and hard labor of breaking and moving camp, how pleased he is the war is over and later of visiting St. Augustine, FL. Bowen continues some correspondence with Dean when he returns to Michigan, the last letter dated Feb. 21, 1899 from Ann Arbor, MI where he is studying law.

Series 4. Correspondence from J. P. Speer to Jennette Dean 1898-07-15

Scope and Contents
J. P. Speer, Company D, 31st Michigan Volunteer Infantry, writes from training camp at Chickamauga, Georgia. He writes of his hope his company will go to Puerto Rico as he is "tired of being a tin soldier." He writes of his feelings for Jennette and his concern they are not reciprocated. "I think more of you than of any other on earth and if I cannot have you I will be disappointed if I don't get next to some Spanish lead."

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Jennette Dean