
Nichols family archive

Finding aid prepared by Gina C Giang and Olga Tsapina.

Manuscripts Department

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Nichols family archive

Inclusive Dates: 1859-1899

Collection Number: mssNichols

Collector: Nichols family

Extent: 3 boxes

Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

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Abstract: The Nichols family was a prominent New England family. This archive focuses specifically on two brothers: George Granville Nichols and Smith Woodward Nichols, Jr.

Language of Material: The records are in English.

Access

Collection is open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, please go to following [web site](#) .

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Preferred Citation

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Acquisition Information

Purchased from James Arsenault & Co., 2018.

Biography

Smith Woodward Nichols (1809-1881), was a prosperous Boston builder and prominent Freemason. In the late 1850s, he moved to Melrose (now part of Greater Boston). His wife, Emeline Pope Nichols (1812-1893), was a daughter of a Maine master mariner and granddaughter of Major Isaac Pope, a Revolutionary War veteran. The couple had ten children, including George Granville and Smith Woodward, Jr.

George Granville Nichols (1836-1899), a stone mason, left Boston to go West, settling in Davenport, Iowa. In July 1862, he enlisted in the 42nd Massachusetts Infantry Regiment and fought in Louisiana until his 9-month regiment was mustered out in August 1863. In April - August 1864, Nichols served as 2nd Lieutenant of an unattached company of the Regiment of Massachusetts Infantry, and on August 1, was commissioned 1st Lieutenant of Co. K. of the 4th Regiment of Massachusetts Heavy Artillery. He was mustered out in June 1865.

Smith Woodward Nichols, Jr. (1843-1915), graduated from the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland in 1860 and served in the United States Navy. During the American Civil War, he served on the United States steam frigate "Wabash," sailing frigate "Macedonian," and steam sloop "Shenandoah." In January 1865, he commanded the assault at Fort Fisher. After the war, he served with Asiatic and South Pacific Squadrons and was commissioned Commander in 1876. Nichols retired in 1882.

Scope and Content

The Nichols family archive consists of correspondence, manuscript volumes, military records, and photographs. George Granville Nichols's letters constitute the largest group of correspondence. His letters from Iowa covered economic, social, and political life in the antebellum Midwest. He wrote about the politics of slavery and abolition, and activities of the local fraternities and lodges. His letters also contained detailed discussion of his plans to go West to mine for gold, complete with considerations of logistics, competitors, and financial risks. His wartime letters covered the entire period of his service in the 42nd Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. Nichols's letters to his family contained highly informative and vivid descriptions of the American Civil War in Louisiana, including his encounters with slaves, "contrabands," women of color,

"rebels," Confederate prisoners, spies, and even some rather creative cotton smugglers. Smith Woodward Nichols, Jr.'s letters described his studies at the Naval Academy and his American Civil War service, including an account of the assault on Fort Fisher. In addition to letters from the Nichols brothers, letters from other family members are present in the collection and present a great resource for examining family and social dynamics of the American Civil War era.

A highlight of the collection is a 27-page diary letter written by George Granville Nichols to his family on May 1, 1859 (Box 1, Folder 7). This diary letter documented one of the most celebrated post-California gold rushes, the excitement that erupted after the discovery of gold in the vicinity of present-day Denver, Colorado. Nichols commented about the difficult conditions of travel, the captivating sights of unfamiliar wild life (especially buffalo), encounters with and presence of Indigenous peoples, and the great number of gold seekers on the road. Part of the journey occurred along the Santa Fe Trail.

Box 2 includes three volumes of lectures recorded by Commander Smith Woodward Nichols, Jr. In 1880, Nichols was ordered to take courses on torpedoes, explosives, and electricity at the United States Torpedo Station in Newport, Rhode Island.

Box 3 primarily includes correspondence related to George Granville Nichols's military service from the United States Army Quartermaster General's Office; United States Department of Treasury; and United States War Department Subsistence Department. He accumulated this paperwork during his service as the assistant quartermaster of the 4th Mass. Artillery, including special orders, requests for ambulances, and proceedings of a board survey. There are three cartes-de-visite, one daguerreotype, and a United States Navy medal of service, likely owned by Smith Woodward Nichols, Jr.

Arrangement

Box 1: Correspondence; Box 2: Manuscript volumes; and Box 3: Miscellaneous correspondence, documents, and photographs

Personal Names

Nichols family

Nichols, George Granville, 1836-1899

Nichols, Smith Woodward, 1809-1881

Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr., 1843-1915

Corporate Names

Shenandoah (Screw sloop)

United States. Army. Massachusetts Heavy Artillery Regiment, 4th (1864-1865)

United States. Army. Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, 42nd (1862-1864)

United States. Navy

United States Naval Torpedo Station (Newport, R.I.)

Subjects

American bison hunting

Electricity

Explosives, Military

Sailors

Slavery -- United States -- Public opinion -- History -- 19th century -- Sources

Soldiers

Torpedoes

Geographic Areas

Colorado -- Gold discoveries

Davenport (Iowa)

Fort Fisher (N.C. : Fort) Siege, 1864-1865 -- Personal narratives

Louisiana -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Personal narratives

Middle West -- History -- 19th century -- Sources

New Orleans (La.)

Santa Fe National Historic Trail -- Description and travel

United States -- History -- 1815-1861 -- Sources

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

Genre

Cartes-de-visite (card photographs)
Correspondence (letters)
Daguerreotypes (photographs)
Lectures
Military records

Box 1	Correspondence
Folder 1	(1859, Jan. 1), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Davenport (Iowa)
Folder 2	(1859, Feb. 25), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Emeline Pope Nichols Location: Davenport (Iowa)
Folder 3	(1859, Feb. 2), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Davenport (Iowa)
Folder 4	(1859, Mar. 13), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Davenport (Iowa)
Folder 5	(1859, Mar. 13), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to "Sister" Location: Davenport (Iowa)
Folder 6	(1859, Apr. 10), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to "Sister" Location: Davenport (Iowa)
Folder 7	(1859, May 1), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to "Father, Mother, Brothers & Sisters" Location: About 50 miles beyond Kansas City
Folder 8	(1859, June 8), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Kendall Nichols Location: Kansas City (Mo.)
Folder 9	(1859, Nov. 18), Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr. A.L.S. to [George Granville Nichols] Location: United States Naval Academy
Folder 10	(1860, Jan. 11), Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr. A.L.S. to George Granville Nichols Location: United States Naval Academy
Folder 11	(1860, Feb. 6), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Davenport (Iowa)
Folder 12	(1860, Mar. 25), Nichols, Smith Woodward A.L.S. to [George Granville Nichols] Location :
Folder 13	(1860, Mar. 29), Nichols, Smith Woodward A.L.S. to George Granville Nichols Location: Melrose (Mass.)
Folder 14	(1860, Sep. 1), Nichols, Kendall A.L.S. to George Granville Nichols Location: Saint Joseph (Mo.)

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| Folder 15 | (1860, Nov. 7), Peck, J.M. A.L.S. to [George Granville Nichols]
Location: Davenport (Iowa) |
| Folder 16 | (1860, Nov. 11), [Hayek, E.O.?] A.L.S. to George Granville Nichols
Location: Davenport (Iowa) |
| Folder 17 | (1860, Nov. 11), [Nichols], Fred A.L.S. to George Granville Nichols
Location: Davenport (Iowa) |
| Folder 18 | (1860, Nov. 25), [Hayek, E.O.?] A.L.S. to George Granville Nichols
Location: Davenport (Iowa) |
| Folder 19 | (1862, Dec. 8), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols
Location: On Board Steam Propellor [sic] Quinebaug |
| Folder 20 | (1862, Dec. 15), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols
Location: Port Royal (S.C.) |
| Folder 21 | (1862, Dec. 21), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to "Parents, Brothers, & Sisters, & Friends"
Location: On Board Steam Propellor [sic] Quinebaug |
| Folder 22 | (1862, Dec. 29), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols and Emeline Pope Nichols
Location: Onboard Steamer Quinebaug |
| Folder 23 | (1862, Dec. 31), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. "Sister"
Location: New Orleans (La.) |
| Folder 24 | (1863, Jan. 9), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols
Location: Carrollton (New Orleans, La.) |
| Folder 25 | (1863, Jan. 18), [Nichols, George Granville] A.L. to "Father, Mother, Brothers & Sisters, & Friends"
Location: Mansfield (La.) |
| Folder 26 | (1863, Feb. 26), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols
Location: Camp Farr, Bayou Gentilly (La.) |
| Folder 27 | (1863, Mar. 5), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to "Father, Mother, and all hands"
Location: Camp Farr, Bayou Gentilly (La.)
Sketch of defenses on p. 3 |
| Folder 28 | (1863, Mar. 30), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols
Location: Camp Farr (La.) |
| Folder 29 | 1863, Apr. 3), [Nichols, George Granville] A.L. to "Sister"
Location: New Orleans (La.)
Incomplete? |
| Folder 30 | (1863, Apr. 11), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to "Sisters"
Location: Camp Farr, Bayou Gentilly (La.) |
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Folder 31	(1863, Apr. 19), [Nichols, George Granville] A.L. to "Sister" Location: Location: New Orleans (La.) Incomplete
Folder 32	(1863, May 8), [Nichols, George Granville] A.L. to Adelaide A. Nichols Location: Camp Farr, New Orleans (La.) Incomplete
Folder 33	(1863, May 12), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Location: Camp Farr, New Orleans (La.)
Folder 34	(1863, May 20), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Camp Farr, New Orleans (La.)
Folder 35	(1863, May 22), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to "Sister" Location: Camp Farr, New Orleans (La.)
Folder 36	(1863, May 26), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to "Sister" Location: Camp Farr, New Orleans (La.)
Folder 37	(1863, June 13), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Camp Farr, New Orleans (La.)
Folder 38	(1863, June 18), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to [Sister] Location: Camp Farr, New Orleans (La.)
Folder 39	(1863, June 23), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: New Orleans (La.)
Folder 40	(1863, June 29), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to "Brother" Location: New Orleans (La.)
Folder 41	(1863, June 30), Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr. A.L.S. to George Granville Nichols Location: New York (State)
Folder 42	(1863, July 1), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: New Orleans (La.)
Folder 43	(1863, July 23), [Nichols, George Granville] A.L. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Algiers (New Orleans, La.)
Folder 44	[1863], Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to ----- Location: [New Orleans (La.)] Incomplete
Folder 45	[1863], Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to ----- Location: [New Orleans (La.)] Incomplete
Folder 46	(1864, Mar. 20), Carlton, A.S. A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Brownville (N.Y.)

Folder 47	(1864, Aug. 14), Jones, Edward J. A.L.S. to "Miss Baxter" Location: Petersburg (Va.)
Folder 48	(1864, Aug. 27), Dunbar, Charles C. A.L.S. to Susie G. Baxter Location: Boston (Mass.)
Folder 49	(1864, Nov. 12), Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr. A.L.S. to [George Granville Nichols] Location: Shenandoah (Screw sloop)
Folder 50	(1865, Jan. 18), Nichols, Smith Woodward A.L.S. to [George Granville Nichols] Location: Melrose (Mass.) Written on Waverly Royal Arch Chapter printed document
Folder 51	(1865, Jan. 21), Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr. A.L.S. to [George Granville Nichols] Location: Shenandoah (Screw sloop)
Folder 52	(1865, Feb. 3), Nichols, Smith Woodward A.L.S. to George Granville Nichols Location: Location: Melrose (Mass.) Written on Waverly Royal Arch Chapter printed document
Folder 53	(1865, Feb. 28), ----- A.L. to Walter B. Dick Location: Arlington (Va.) Incomplete
Folder 54	(1865, Feb. 28), ----- A.L.S. to J.M. Reno Location: Arlington (Va.) Verso: Signatures
Folder 55	(1865, Mar. 15), Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr. A.L.S. George Granville Nichols Location: USS Passaic
Folder 56	(1865, Mar. 16), Dick, Walter B. A.L.S. to J.M. Reno Location: Fort Corcoran (Arlington, Va.)
Folder 57	(1865, May 26), Nichols, George Granville A.L.S. to Smith Woodward Nichols Location: Richmond (Va.)
Folder 58	(1865, Dec. 7), Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr. A.L.S. to Kendall Nichols Location: Shenandoah (Screw sloop)
Folder 59	(186-, May 24), Marden, Emmeline Pope (Nichols) A.L.S. to "Brother" Location: Washington [(D.C.)] Postscript from Addie F. Marden
Folder 60	[186-], ----- A.L.S. to [Lewis B. Co---is?] Draft?
Folder 61	(1899, Jan. 29), United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions L.S. to "Mrs. Nichols" Signed by Jacob H. (Jacob Harold) Gallinger, 1837-1918
Box 2	Manuscript volumes

Volume 1	(1880) Torpedoes. Cmdr. S.W. Nichols, U.S.N. U.S. Torpedo Station, Newport, R.I. [Cover title]
Volume 2	(1880) Explosives. Cmdr. S.W. Nichols, U.S.N. U.S. Torpedo Station, Newport, R.I. [Cover title] Location :
Volume 3	(1880) Electricity. Cmdr. S.W. Nichols, U.S.N. U.S. Torpedo Station, Newport, R.I. [Cover title]
Box 3	Miscellaneous correspondence, documents, and photographs
Folder 1	Affidavit -- Notice of Appointment, (1865, Apr. 15) Filed by Elijah Baxter regarding Erasmus Thomas' estate Included: Letter from U.S.A. General Hospital related to Thomas' death, Mar. 14, 1865
Folder 2	Appointment -- Commonwealth of Massachusetts to George Granville Nichols, (1864, Aug. 18)
Folder 3	Blank form -- Post Historian, Record Book, [after 1863] Filled out by George Granville Nichols
Folder 4	Blank form -- Volunteer Enlistment, (1862, Sep.) Filled out by John Carvey
Folder 5	Cartes-de-visite (card photographs), [1865] 1. Nichols, George Granville; Cushing, ----; and Cranston, ----, [1865]. Cross, Daniel (b. 1836), photographer. Cross & Childs, Forts Richardson & Lyon, Va. The partnership Cross & Childs was licensed in May 1865; 2. Cushing, ----? with unidentified woman. Ulke, Henry (1821-1910), photographer; and 3. Nichols, George Granville, Mass. Heavy Artillery Reg., 4th. Barbour, Thomas, photographer. T. Barbour, 88 Hanover Street, Boston
Folder 6	Certificate -- Commonwealth of Massachusetts to George Granville Nichols, (1864, Apr. 29)
Folder 7	Commemorative medal -- [Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr.], [undated] For service in the United States. Navy
Folder 8	Correspondence (letters) -- United States. Army. Quartermaster General's Office to George Granville Nichols, (1865-1868) Related to returns
Folder 9	Correspondence (letters) -- United States. Department of the Treasury to George Granville Nichols, (1865-1867) Related to letters of settlement and returns Included: Reply letter from Nichols, July 13, 1865
Folder 10	Correspondence (letters) -- United States. War Department. Subsistence Department to George Granville Nichols, (1865) Included: Printed Circular No. 1
Folder 11	Daguerreotypes (photographs) -- [Nichols, George Granville], [1855] Higgins, Oscar T., (active Boston, Massachusetts 1854 - 1864) Housed in original thermoplastic case

- Folder 12 **Discharge -- Greene, Rufus C., (1863, Aug. 20)**
 Torn
- Folder 13 **Discharge -- Nichols, George Granville, (1863, Aug. 20)**
- Folder 14 **Empty envelope, [1860s]**
- Folder 15 **Lists (documents genre) -- Nichols, George Granville, (1865)**
 Received of...the following clothing, camp and garrison equipage, at Camp Meigs,
 Readville, Mass.; Received of...the number of copies of Military Register
- Folder 16 **Memoriam -- In Memoriam. George Granville Nichols, [1899]**
- Folder 17 **Orders (military records) -- Special Order No. 5, 13, 71, 116, 173, and 223; General
Order No. 14, (1863-1865)**
 Included: Printed copy; retained copy; and extracts
- Folder 18 **Printout -- Nichols, Smith Woodward, Jr., [1873]**
 Computer printout of photo # NH 43226 from [Naval History and Heritage Command](#)