Sparks family papers

Finding aid prepared by Olga Tsapina
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Sparks family papers
Dates: 1856-1897
Dates: bulk 1861-1864
Collection Number: mssHM 60739-60822
Creator OR Collector: Sparks (Family)
Extent: 84 pieces
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens Manuscripts Department

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Abstract: Correspondence and documents of the Sparks and Reed families.

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
[Identification of item], Sparks family papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Acquisition Information
Purchased from Butterfield & Butterfield, May 1999.

Biographical Note
The Sparks family of Bell County, Texas, was founded by William C. Sparks, a native of Mississippi. Having obtained a grant of land from the Mexican government, he settled in Robertson county and moved to Bell County in the early 1850s. He married Jane Alexander (d. 1867), a native of Arkansas. They had six children: Clara Jane (who married Volney Cavitt and lived in Wheelock, Robertson County), John, Elijah (private of Co. I of the 17th Texas Infantry, who died of pneumonia in camp in Dec. 1862), William C. (private of Co. E of 2nd Texas), Minerva (wife of Michael Reed), and Samuel A. (who ended the Civil War with the rank of the Lieutenant, and later was a farmer in Wilkinson Valley and sheriff of the Bell County).

Michael R. Reed, son of John R. Reed and husband of Minerva Sparks, joined the 17th Regiment of the Texas Infantry in June 1862, together with his brothers, Henry and Edmund, and his brother-in-law, Elijah. The regiment, part of Walker's Texas Division, McCulloch’s Brigade, took part in the Red River Campaign. In Dec. 1862, Michael Reed was a male nurse at a hospital in Austin, Arkansas. In June-July 1863, he was sent to a convalescent camp four miles north of Monroe, Louisiana. In Dec. 1863 he went home on furlough. In March, when he returned to camp, he was arrested and was about to be court-martialed. He died of wounds in July, 1864 near Alexandria, La.

William Sparks, brother of Minerva Sparks Reed, joined the 2nd Texas Infantry, nicknamed “2nd Texas Sharpshooters.” The regiment, one of the best drilled regiments in the Confederate Army, took part in the battle of Shiloh, Farmington, occupation of Juka, siege of Corinth, and siege of Vicksburg. It surrendered with the remainder of the Vicksburg garrison on July 4, 1863. After the surrender of Vicksburg, William Sparks made it back to Texas. The regiment was reorganized at Houston in the fall 1863, and served on the coast of Texas to the end of the war.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged chronologically. It is housed in two boxes.

Scope and Content
Letters from Michael R. Reed, William Sparks, and Clara Jane Cavitt to Minerva Sparks Reed; also documents relating to the Sparks family.

Michael Reed's letters describe the regiment's march through Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas, the minutia of camp life, and encounters with Union prisoners. He at length discusses conscription, substitutes, and desertions, and duly reported war news, often rather distorted (thus he reported rumors of a complete Confederate victory at Gettysburg and Vicksburg). William Sparks' letters were written during the siege of Vicksburg and blockade of Galveston. They contain information about camp life, diseases, (especially the outbreak of yellow fever), conscripts, Methodist preaching in Galveston, war news, and discussion of Confederate politics.

The letters of Clara Jane Cavitt and other papers of the Sparks family document life in Texas in 1850-1860s, including charity and war efforts, reaction to the conscript law of April 1862, and discussion of war news.

Typewritten transcripts are available.

**Personal Names**
- Cavitt, Clara Jane Sparks
- Reed, Michael R.
- Reed, Minerva Sparks
- Sparks (Family)
- Sparks, William C.

**Corporate Names**
- Confederate States of America. Army -- Military life -- Sources
- Confederate States of America. Army. Texas Infantry Regiment, 2nd
- Confederate States of America. Army. Texas Infantry Regiment, 17th

**Subjects**
- Red River Expedition, 1864 -- Personal narratives, Confederate
- Shiloh, Battle of, Tenn., 1862 -- Personal narratives, Confederate
- Soldiers -- Southern States -- Correspondence

**Geographic Areas**
- Galveston (Tex.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources
- Texas -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Regimental histories -- Sources
- Texas -- Social life and customs -- 19th century -- Sources
- United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Personal narratives, Confederate.
- Vicksburg (Miss.) -- History -- Siege, 1863 -- Personal narratives, Confederate

**Genre**
- Family papers -- Texas -- 19th century
- Letters (correspondence) -- Confederate States of America

**Box 1  1856-1863, July (HM 60767-60787)**

| HM 60739 | McLean, Charles D. Letter to William C. Sparks (1856, Mar. 19)  
|          | Jackson, Tenn. |

| HM 60740 | Reed, Edmund T. Letter to Michael R. Reed (1857, Mar. 21)  
|          | Fayette Co., Tex. |

| HM 60741 | Alexander, John. Letter to "Dear son and family" (1858, Mar. 29)  
|          | Ark. |

| HM 60742 | Bill (1858, Apr. 16)  
|          | Tex. |
| HM 60743 | Cavitt, Clara Jane Sparks. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1858, Apr. 23) Wheelock, Tex. |
| HM 60745 | Texas. Bell County. Court. Order banning Jane Sparks, John Sparks, and Michael R. Reed from trespassing on the land of William C. Sparks (1859, Sep. 21) Bell County, Tex. |
| HM 60746 | Texas. Bell County. Court. Petition for injunction for Jane Sparks (1859, Sep. 22) Bell County, Tex. |
| HM 60747 | Cavitt, Volney. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed [1859?] Wheelock, Tex. |
| HM 60750 | Cavitt, Clara Jane Sparks. Letter to Elijah Sparks (1862, May 11) Robertson County, Tex. |
| HM 60751 | Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1862, June 10) Travis County, Tex. |
| HM 60752 | Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1862, June 18) Travis County, Tex. |
| HM 60753 | Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1862, July 3) Travis County, Tex. |
| HM 60754 | Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1862, Sep. 16) Tyler, Smith County, Tex. |
| HM 60755 | Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1862, Sep. 22) Tyler, Smith County, Tex. |
| HM 60756 | Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1862, Oct. 9) Washington, Ark. |
| HM 60757 | Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1862, Oct. 23) Little Rock, Ark. |
| HM 60758 | Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1862, Nov. 3) Little Rock, Ark. |
| HM 60759 | Reed, Minerva Sparks. Letter to Michael R. Reed (1862, Nov. 9) Little River, Bell County, Tex. |
Sparks family papers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HM 60777</td>
<td>Apr. 18</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Pine Bluff, Ark.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HM 60778</td>
<td>Apr. 27</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Pine Bluff, Ark.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HM 60779</td>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Roberton County, Tex.</td>
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<td>HM 60780</td>
<td>May 25</td>
<td>Cavitt, Clara Jane Sparks. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Tensas River, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60781</td>
<td>May 25</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Tensas River, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60782</td>
<td>June 2</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Tensas River, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60783</td>
<td>July 1</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Monroe, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60784</td>
<td>July 5</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Monroe, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60785</td>
<td>July 10</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Monroe, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60786</td>
<td>July 18</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Monroe, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60787</td>
<td>July 28</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Black Lake, La.</td>
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**Box 2**

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<th>Reference</th>
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<td>HM 60789</td>
<td>Aug. 27</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>&quot;Camp Texas,&quot; La.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HM 60790</td>
<td>Sep. 5</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Alexandria, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60791</td>
<td>Sep. 9</td>
<td>Cavitt, Clara Jane Sparks. Letter to Jane Alexander Sparks</td>
<td>Wheelock, Tex. Incomplete.</td>
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<td>HM 60792</td>
<td>Sep. 18</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Alexandria, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60793</td>
<td>Sep. 23</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Alexandria, La.</td>
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<td>HM 60794</td>
<td>Sep. 30</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Alexandria, La.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HM 60795</td>
<td>Oct. 8</td>
<td>Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed</td>
<td>Alexandria, La.</td>
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HM 60796  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1863, Oct. 13)
Alexandria, La.

HM 60797  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed [1863, Oct. 19]
HM 60798  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1863, Oct. 20)
Alexandria, La.

HM 60799  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1863, Nov. 5)
Alexandria, La.

HM 60800  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1863, Nov. 12)
Alexandria, La.

HM 60801  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1863, Dec. 3)
Alexandria, La.

HM 60802  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1863, Dec. 12)
Velasco, Tex.

HM 60803  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1863, Dec. 15)
Alexandria, La.

HM 60804  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Jan. 25)
HM 60805  Sparks, John D. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Feb. 15)
New Braunfels, Tex.

HM 60806  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Mar. 11)

HM 60807  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Mar. 14)
Camp Sidney, Tex.

HM 60808  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Mar. 24)
Grand Ecore, La. Fragile.

HM 60809  Reed, Michael R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Apr. 7)
Mansfield, La. Letter may be dated 1863, Apr. 7. Following the above: Thomas R. Berry letter (1864, Apr. 7) to "My Dear Bettie."

HM 60810  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Apr. 14)
Galveston, Tex.

HM 60811  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, May 5)
Mud Island, Tex.

HM 60812  Berry, Thomas R. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, July 4)
Alexandria, La.

HM 60813  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Sep. 15)
Galveston, Tex. Fragile.

HM 60814  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Sep. 30)
Galveston, Tex.
HM 60815  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Oct. 26)
Greens Bayou, Galveston Island, Tex. With envelope.

HM 60816  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1864, Nov. 4)
Greens Bayou, Galveston Island, Tex. Fragile.

HM 60817  Sparks, William C. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1865, Jan. 4)
Galveston, Tex.

HM 60818  Hanover, Clara E. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1872, Dec. 17)
Wheelock, Tex.

HM 60819  Cavitt, Volney. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1874, Mar. 23)
Wheelock, Tex.

HM 60820  McPherson, T. F. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1874, Sep. 23)
Halville, Harrison County, Tex.

HM 60821  Sparks, Samuel A. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1885, Jan. 30)
Wilkinson Valley, Tex.

HM 60822  Cavitt, Clara Jane Sparks. Letter to Minerva Sparks Reed (1897, Mar. 22)
Robertson County, Tex.

Folder 3  Sparks Family Typescripts