Finding aid for the Orion Ashenfelter papers 0195

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Abstract: A collection of nineteen letters written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family while on his tour of duty in the U.S. Navy, which began on January 29, 1900. Included in these letters is an eyewitness account of events during the Boxer Rebellion in China.
Storage Unit: 1
Preferred Citation
[Box/folder# or item name], Orion Ashenfelter papers, Collection no. 0195, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California
Conditions Governing Access
COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. Advance notice required for access.
Scope and Contents
Collection contains a total of nineteen letters written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. Ashenfelter was born on December 28, 1875. He was on duty with the U.S. Navy at the time that the letters were written. The first letter is dated March 3, 1900 and the last letter is dated November 3, 1901. Topics discussed in letters include personal family matters as well as events that occurred during Ashenfelter's time in service.
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Subjects and Indexing Terms
Letters
Armed Forces -- History -- Archival resources
United States -- History -- Archival resources
Soldiers -- United States -- 20th century -- Archival resources
East Asia -- History -- Archival resources
Ashenfelter, Orion
Ashenfelter, Orion -- Archives

Box 1, folder 1
Ashenfelter to Mother and Father 1900 March 28
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion, addressed to his mother and father. Orion writes to his family to inform them that he received both of their letters and greatly enjoyed reading them. In addition, he mentions that he received a letter from Hellen and Bob. Orion writes that he is not bad at target practice and made 18 out of 25 at 100 yards. He says that he does not receive nearly as many letters as some of the other guys and asks that Fred and Bob to write more often.
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter, to his mother and father. Orion thanks his parents for sending him the paper but asks them only to send the Saturday morning and evening paper. He informs his family that he is in good health and that he has been studying hard for his exams. He says that if he passes his exam, he will be made an ordinary seaman at $19.00 per month. He tells his mother to expect Navy tobacco for his father and that it will be delivered by his old drill master, Mr. Crouse. He informs his mother that he will soon be out of debt.

Norfolk, VA 1900 April 19
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter, to his mother and father. Orion responds to his parent’s letter and lets them know that he received their letter and the dollar bill that they sent him. He tells his parents about a fight that broke out with a marine on board. He says he has been awaiting every day for the Buffalo and that can’t wait until she arrives.

Fayle Azore Islands 1900 May 19
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his mother, father, brothers, and sisters. He informs his family that he only received a letter from his mother and Hellen. He tells his mother that he is feeling fine and in good health and he wishes the same for them all. He tells his mother that the work at sea has been difficult but that he doesn’t mind as long as he is fulfilling his heart’s desire to travel the world by sea. Orion does his best to describe the beautiful city of Fayle. He tells his mother that about 1/3 of the crew was punished for getting drunk and fighting while being on shore, and cannot go on shore for 2 or 3 months as a punishment. Orion ends his letter and tells family that he is near Gilbraltar.

Gilbraltar 1900 May 24
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion, addressed to his entire family. He informs his mother and father that he has arrived in Gilbraltar. He asks his mother to tell Bob that he met “that boy” and that he dressed their ship with flags. He writes that at noon every ship will fire a gun for each year that their queen has lived. He ends his letter and tells his mother that he will send her an additional letter in which he fully describes the beauty of Azores after he has had his liberty onshore.

Valleta Malta Islands 1900 June 29
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion, addressed to his entire family. Orion writes about Gibraltar and arrived at Valleta. He describes that trip as the most interesting and amazing memory. Orion describes the ancient architectural work and says he is an awe of how important the small island truly is to ancient, biblical, and modern history. He wonders how the ancient island must have looked under the Carthaginian rule in 260 B. C. and under the rule of the Germans in about 130 B. C. Orion goes on to write about the history of the island.

Taku, China 1900 August 5
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family, he says he is writing to them because although he hasn’t received their letters, he wants them to know where he is and that he is safe. He says that he feels lonely as many of the men are being transferred to different boats, including himself. Orion lets them know that he is to be transferred to one of the smallest boats in the Navy, the “Nashville” who was the first to fire the first shot during the Spanish war.
Box 1, folder 6  Nechwang, China 1900 August 11
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. Orion starts his letter by apologizing for not being able to send out the letter before. He describes the war as awful and that it has gotten to the point where he has become accustomed to seeing dead Chinese bodies down the river. He mentions a ship filled with wounded Russians that stopped by. He says the skies are always lit up at night for miles due to shooting of rifles between the opposing countries. Orion tells his family that there is so much more that he would like to tell them but that it will have to wait if he wants to get his letter mailed on time.

Box 1, folder 7  Port Victoria Seychelles Island 1900 August 20
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. He tells his folks that if he told them the island in which they stop to seek shelter, they would not know it, instead he describes the neighboring locations that they would be familiar with. Orion informs them that the Aden and Colombo are the first American gun boats that traveled to that location. He writes that the Skipper dropped anchor and they went ashore to ask the natives for fresh meat and they said they only had turtle and no beef. He describes a path that he walked through as being lined with oranges, coconuts, limes, lemons, as well as many fruits and berries that he did not know the names of. He described the path of fruits being so thick that you could not see 10 feet into the path. Orion wrote that when F. N. and his crew came aboard, one of the policemen called him out along with the doctor. After having checked them, the doctor notified him that he needed medicine. He describes the medicine bottle as being black with a white skull and cross bones in the front. Orion goes on writing about his experiences on board and finally closes his letter.

Box 1, folder 8  Shanghai, China 1900 September 23
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. He starts his letter by telling his family that he received their most recent letters. He tells them that he can’t begin to describe the “walled city” but that there are men running around everywhere on little wagons. He says that the streets are so narrow that the Chinese people always walk in single file lines. Orion goes on to describe Shanghai and his experiences during his stay there.

Box 1, folder 9  Shanghai, China 1900 October 26
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. Orion starts his letter by telling his family that he received a bulk of letters all together. He said he was surprised to find out that Bob was in Rhode Island, and said he would fear for his brother’s safety until he heard news that he was back home. Orion writes a bit about the map of China to explain to his family where he is. He wrote that when they set anchor, the natives approached the ship to sell beautiful leopard and tiger skins for very good prices. He informs his family that he will probably stay at that same station until next Spring and that after they will probably move to Alaska, the Bering Sea, California, and all along the coast of North and South America.

Box 1, Folder 10  Nagasaki, Japan 1900 November 16
Scope and Contents
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. Orion starts his letter by apologizing that his family did not receive his last letter. He informs them that he stopped by Shanghai for repairs and describes how food such as chicken are prepared, he says that he included a photograph so she can get an idea of what meal time is like. Orion describes the temples as being beautiful with a marvelous bird’s eye view of Nagasaki. Orion writes that it is his first Christmas away from home, and that he wished he could have sent his family better gifts, however, he says the tax fees are too high and would probably end up costing more than the gifts. He ends his letter by saying that he will send everything once he is in Alaska or Manila.
**Nagasaki, Japan 1900 December 4**

**Scope and Contents**

Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. Orion starts off his letter by notifying his family that he received his father’s letter. He lets them know that he had a very pleasant Christmas. He writes that he is not sure whether the war will end anytime soon, seeing that you hear nothing but the talk about war. Orion lets his family know that he has sent additional photographs of the trees that General Grant and his wife planted as well as the streets of Nagasaki and closes his letter.

**Nagasaki, Japan 1900 December 28**

**Scope and Contents**

Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. Orion starts his song by saying that since it’s the end of the year, he will give his family a description of what his first year in the Navy has been like. He starts off by saying that was sworn in at the League Island Navy Yard. Orion was then transferred to the U.S.S.R.S. at Norfolk, Va. Afterwards, he was transferred to the U. S. S. Buffalo at the Norfolk dock yards. Orion goes on to give specific dates in which he was in places such as the Azores Islands, England, China, among many other destinations. Orion closes his letter by thanking everyone for their letters. Towards the end of the later, he makes note that it is his 25th birthday.

**San Fernando Island of Luzon 1901 February 14**

**Scope and Contents**

Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. Orion told writes to his folks and tells them that he wanted to have a letter ready in case a ship that was picking up mail happened to pass. He informs them that he left Japanese land on January 29th and headed down to Manila. He tells his parents that his current location was a small bay called San Fernando. He describes the scenery of San Fernando. He tells her that their source of meat is fish. He tells his mother not to worry as he will not be able to right as much during his stay there.

**Singapore Malay 1901 July 12**

**Scope and Contents**

Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his parents. He tell them that he left Manila on July 3rd and that after a rough trip, they arrived in Singapore on July 10th. He describes it as a very beautiful country. He tells his mother that they spent the 4th of July at sea and that most of the guys had a goodtime, however, he was sick that day. Orion tells his mother that they spend most of their evenings singing. He lets his mother know that before he left Manila, he sent his father 2 boxes of cigars and that he bought her a satin table cover. He ends his letter by stating that he is in good health and that he hopes the same for his family.

**Genoa, Italy 1901 September 29**

**Scope and Contents**

Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. Orion lets his family know that he has every third day off. He describes Genoa as being fine and that he would live there if he could. He says the Genoa has fine weather and music. He describes an exhibit that features a statue of Columbus along with some letters that he wrote. He wishes to make enough money to visit Monte Carlo and he recommends that his parents read Mark Twain because it gives a very good description of some of the cities which he has visited. Orion informs his family that he received the most recent papers and that he was saddened to hear about the death of the president.
Box 1, folder 16  
**Genoa, Italy 1901 November 3**

**Scope and Contents**
Letter written by Orion Ashenfelter to his family. Orion starts off by greeting his family and telling them that he is okay and that he wishes the same for them. He tells his mother that he has sent her a painting of the ship that he was onboard, which was the first ship that fired a gun in the war with Spain. He mentions that the painting also includes the Chicago on the right, as well as the U.S.S. Albany. Orion writes that for the last 8 months he has been doing the duties of an officer as a carpenter’s mate. He writes to his parents that he thinks that he should be paid an officer’s salary for those 8 months that he has been doing the duty.

Box 1, folder 17  
**Orion New Address undated**

**Scope and Contents**
In the letter written by Orion Ashenfelter, he apologizes for his letter and says he ran out of time to write a new letter since his last one had been destroyed. Orion ends the letter by giving his new address to receive correspondence.