

Preston Family Correspondence

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1861, 1872



Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2010.070

Unit Date

1861, 1872

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

The Preston Family Correspondence consists of two letters. The first is written by James Francis Preston to his wife, Sarah Caperton Preston; he details the events of and his involvement in the First Battle of Bull Run during the American Civil War. The second letter is written by Sarah to Colonel Grabowski and discusses her son's (Hugh Caperton Preston) failure to follow an order at Preston and Olin Institute (now Virginia Tech).

Creator

Preston, Sarah Caperton, 1826-

Creator

Preston, James Francis, 1820-1862

Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 oversized folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

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Source of Acquisition

The Preston Family Correspondence was donated to Special Collections in 2010.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Preston Family Correspondence was completed in October 2010.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Preston Family Correspondence, Ms2010-070, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Col. James Francis Preston was born in Virginia and was educated at West Point Military Academy. He volunteered in the Mexican War and both equipped and organized his company completely at his own expense. While serving the Union army during the American Civil War, he died of exposure in 1862. His wife, Sarah Caperton Preston, was from Elmwood, Monroe County, West Virginia.

Hugh Caperton Preston was the son of James Francis and Sarah Caperton Preston. He was born on September 5, 1856 in Elmwood, West Virginia. In 1877, he graduated as a senior Captain from Virginia Military Institute. Afterwards, he managed his mother's estate (White Thorn) in Montgomery County, Virginia until he sold it in 1892. Hugh then moved to East Radford and pursued real-estate and insurance business as well as serving two terms as Mayor. In the Spanish American War, Hugh served in Company M of Virginia's 4th Volunteer Infantry, stationed in Cuba. He then served in the 31st US Volunteer Company in the Philippines, where he was promoted to the rank of 1st Lieutenant. On April 30, 1878, Hugh married Miss Cary Marx Baldwin; they had seven children together. In 1901, Hugh and his wife returned to East Radford, where he then worked in the real-estate business for the rest of his life.

External source:

"Hugh Caperton Preston." USGenWeb Archives - Census Wills Deeds Genealogy. Web. 15 Oct. 2010. <http://files.usgwarchives.net/wv/monroe/bios/preston.tx>.

Scope and Content

The Preston Family Correspondence consists of two letters.

The first letter is dated on July 28, 1861 and is written by James Francis Preston to his wife, Sarah Caperton Preston following the First Battle of Bull Run during the American Civil War. He writes about the battle's events and his own movements, including executing a direct order from General Jackson to charge the advancing enemy. In the beginning of his letter, James calls the battle a "fearful sight."

The second letter dates to May 15, 1872 and is written by Sarah Caperton Preston to Colonel Grabowski, an instructor at Preston and Olin Institute (now Virginia Tech) in Blacksburg. The letter is a response to a previous notice from the Colonel about her son's (Hugh Caperton Preston) recent failure to follow a senior student's order at Preston and Olin. Sarah passively defends her son, explaining why he might have disobeyed the order. She also expresses confusion at some of the Colonel's reasoning for her son's behavior. Additionally, Sarah expresses hope that her son will gain maturity with age and learn that, "an officers commision will not always shield him."

Related Archival Materials

See the following materials, which are also at Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives:
Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, Montgomery County Branch Papers, Ms1962-001
John Preston Deed, Ms2005-014
John Preston Papers, Ms1994-034
Preston Family (Alice Preston Moore Collection) Papers, Ms1962-004
Preston Family (Charles Peale Didier Collection) Papers, Ms1985-020
Robert Taylor Preston Papers, Ms1992-003
Smithfield Preston Foundation Papers, Ms1997-002
William Preston Land Grant, Ms1994-027
Willard Preston Genealogy, Ms2009-121
George Green Shackelford Papers, Ms1983-008

Keywords

Blacksburg (Va.)
Civil War
Local/Regional History and Appalachian South
Montgomery County (Va.)
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
Women -- History
Preston, Hugh Caperton, 1856-1905

Existence and Location of Copies

Scans of both letters and the envelope are available online.

Rights Statement for Archival Description

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Arrangement

This collection was arranged by material type.

Description of Subordinate Components

Letter

Unit Date 1861

oversize 1 (folder)

Extent 0.1 Cubic Feet

Letter

Unit Date 1872

oversize 1 (folder)

Extent 0.1 Cubic Feet

Envelope

Unit Date 1872

oversize 1 (folder)

Extent 0.1 Cubic Feet