

Wickham, Williams C., Letters

Williams C. Wickham Letters

1863



Title Statement

Wickham, Williams C., Letters Williams C. Wickham Letters, 1863 Ms.2025.090

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Publication Statement

Publisher: Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries (0434)
560 Drillfield Drive
Newman Library, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Business Number: 540-231-6308
specref@vt.edu
URL: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu>



2025 (CC0 1.0)

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2025-10-16 07:01:49 -0400.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2025.090

Unit Date

1863

Language

The materials in this collection are in English.

Abstract

The collection contains three letters written between August 3 and August 28, 1863 by Col. Williams C. Wickham (1820-1888) of the 4th Virginia Cavalry of the Confederate Army during the American Civil War. The letters are primarily about promotions and the ordnance department.

Creator

Wickham, Williams Carter, 1820-1888

Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Source of Acquisition

The Williams C. Wickham Letters were purchased by Special Collections and University Archives in December 2019.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Williams C. Wickham Letters was completed in October 2025.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Williams C. Wickham Letters, 1863, Ms2025-090, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Williams Carter Wickham, attorney, farmer, politician, Confederate brigadier general and president of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company (the C&O), was born September 21, 1820. The son of William Fanning and Anne Butler Carter Wickham, Williams Wickham was born in Richmond, Virginia but reared on his father's plantation, Hickory Hill, in Hanover County. He graduated from the University of Virginia and was admitted to the Virginia bar in 1842 but seems to have devoted much of his time to managing Hickory Hill. He married Lucy Penn Taylor, and the couple had four children. Wickham was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1849 and also served as the presiding justice on the Hanover County court. In 1858, he became captain of a unit of Virginia militia cavalry, and in 1859 was elected as a Whig to the state senate.

Wickham voted against the ordinance of secession in the 1861 Virginia convention, but once secession had been effected, he and his company, the Hanover Dragoons, joined the Confederate Army during the American Civil War. After First Manassas, Wickham was commissioned colonel of the Fourth Virginia Cavalry. At the Battle of Williamsburg, Wickham was wounded and captured but soon paroled and healed. Wounded again after the Battle of Antietam, Wickham had rejoined his regiment by late 1862 and participated in the battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. He was promoted to brigadier general on September 9, 1863. Wickham resigned his commission on October 4, 1864, and assumed the Confederate Congress seat to which he had been elected in the spring of 1863.

Just weeks after the cessation of hostilities, Wickham joined the Republican Party, providing his reasons in an open letter which estranged many of his colleagues. The former general was elected president of the Virginia Central Railroad Company in November 1865, and when that line merged with the Covington & Ohio Railroad in 1868 to become the C&O, Wickham was retained as the new company's president. He served as vice-president of the company from 1869 to 1878, when the company went into foreclosure, with Wickham as receiver. Under reorganization of the company, Wickham served as second vice-president. During this time, he maintained an active political life, being elected chairman of the Hanover County board of supervisors in 1871 and a state senator in 1883. He held all of these positions at the time of his death on July 23, 1888.

Scope and Content

The collection contains three letters written by Col. Williams C. Wickham of the 4th Virginia Cavalry of the Confederate Army during the American Civil War. The first letter, dated August 3, 1863, is addressed to Major H. B. Mclellan. In the letter, Wickham describes what he hopes for promotions within the 4th Virginia Cavalry, after he steps down from his position. In the second, dated August 10, 1863, Wickham expresses his complaints about the ordnance department and a Capt. Baldwin. The last letter is dated August 28, 1863, and is addressed to Leut. H. Lee. This letter includes a request for a Capt. W. B. Newton to get a promotion after the resignation of a major in the 4th Virginia Cavalry.

Related Archival Materials

See the following related materials, which are also at Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives:

Williams Carter Wickham Letterbook, Ms2008-011

Williams C. Wickham Order, Ms2018-020

Keywords

Civil War

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

Confederate States of America. Army. Virginia Cavalry Regiment, 4th

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Description of Subordinate Components

Williams C. Wickham Letters

Unit Date 1863

folder Folder 1