

John B. Snodgrass lettersMS.0072

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1862

Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

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Unit ID

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Unit Date

1862

Language

English .

Creator

Snodgrass, John B. (John Breathed), 1843-1908

Extent

9 items

Physical Location

Manuscripts stacks

Repository

Virginia Military Institute Archives

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Biographical / Historical

John Breathed Snodgrass was born in 1843 in Berkeley County, West Virginia. He is a non-graduate, VMI class of 1864. He later became a physician. Snodgrass died in 1908 in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of eight letters and one letter fragment from Cadet John B. Snodgrass to his sister Katherine (Kate) Snodgrass-Boyd. All letters are dated 1862 and written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. The primary topic is the Civil War and its effect on the Snodgrass family, with occasional references to VMI. Multiple letters (see April 19, May 1, May 18) mention that Corps of Cadets has been ordered to aid General Stonewall Jackson because he is "anxious to get a shot at the enemy."

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865

Slavery

United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865—Home life

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Correspondence

Snodgrass family

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Online Access

John B. Snodgrass letters are available online.

Description of Subordinate Components

Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5278

Unit Date 1862

Language English.

Extent 9 items

Letter to Katherine Snodgrass-Boyd

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5263

Unit Date 1862 February 22

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards poor weather, the inauguration of Confederate president Jefferson Davis, French studies, and family matters.

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Davis, Jefferson, 1808-1889

Transcription

Virginia Military Inst Feb 22nd 1862

My Dear Sister, Colonel Tate has decreed that I shan't go to Lexington, today, for tis raining hard, and I am forced to stay close to barracks. My roommate and myself had intended to pay "our respects" to two young "Misses" but have thus been foiled. Today above all others ought to have been bright and clear, as it tis the day on which our glorious President is to be inaugurated. All honour to him; and to our glorious young Confederacy! Which he pledges his sacred honour to maintain. Though this 22nd is dark and gloomy; may that 22nd yet dawn which shall behold our unsullied banner floating in triumph over our Southern homes fanned by the gentle zephyrs of Heaven. I am glad to hear you are in such a high class. I am in the 3rd Class (alias) Sophmores. I have just commenced studying French, also. I don't think it tis at all hard, on the other hand it is very easy. I would rather read some some good novel, than bother my head about "Je poole". Since the great disaster to our arms at Roanoke Island, and Fort Donalson, the Cadets have all tendered the services to Gov. Letcher. I don't suppose he will except us. We have not heard from him yet. I wish he would accept us. I think every one ought to be in the field. I had no idea your school is as large, as you say. We have three hundred here. Tell Miss Georgiana (is that her name?) that Mr. Selden is here and a very pleasant young man. Give my best love to Miss Georgia, complement her highly on her beautiful hand writing. My room mates all agreed with me that she wrote a beautiful hand - would that I could write one half as good. Tell me her name in your next. I am bound to come down to see her, and close her from all your blushing roses, as the sweetest, the loveliest, the best. We are going to have a grand dinner today, seventy-five turkeys to celebrate the 22nd. We would have fired thirteen cannons this morning - but it was to wet. Dandridge is not here. All are well at home when I last heard, they write you oftener than they do me. Bose wrote me he was not going to enlist again, for some time. You asked me to come up and see you Easter I wish I could. I will not see you for two years. I will not be allowed to go home next summer at all, unless I withdraw altogether. Were I to stay here it would take me to years to graduate, which is a long long time. I never cantemplate any thing of the kind now. Times are so very uncertain, we realize now more than ever the quotation "No man can tell what a day may bring forth". Well Kate I must close, write me very soon. Love to Nannie and Misses - and believe me your aff brother (signed) John B. Snodgrass

Letter fragment to Katherine Snodgrass-Boyd

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5264

Unit Date 1862 February

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards family matters, the death of a classmate, and the desire to have been at Jefferson Davis' inaguration.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Davis, Jefferson, 1808-1889

Transcription

Ma said you were very homesick. You should get over that. The time will soon pass away and you will be home again. The boys are having a splendid time in Martinsburg. Miss Lottie and Miss Pink Bolten are up. Jack H. and Miss Lottie are engaged cousin Fannie says. Tom Harrison is now at home he is a Lieutenant. We had splendid fire works here the night of the 22nd. I never saw such beautiful ones in my life. I am certainly sorry to hear of my class - mates death. I think it cannot be so. His death was certainly tragical. He was staying at a friends house, lying on a sofa, when the husband and wife came in, and the later remarked, "Oh, is he not handsome and bent over and kissed him. Her husband immediately shot him. However this may be I intend to address a letter to him. 18th Miss. Regt. Co. K. Leesburg Va. Ma complains of me not writing long letters, the same she says of you. So you better write long letters in future. I nevefr can think of anthing to write. I wish the Cadets could have gone to Richmond the 22nd. I should have liked much to have been present at the inauguration of our first President. Well Kate I have no time to spare tonight - so goodbye- Love to all - your aff. Brother - John B. Snodgrass

Letter to Katherine Snodgrass-Boyd

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5265

Unit Date 1862 March 8

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards family matters and news of the Federals being in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

Keywords

Correspondence

United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865—Home life

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Snodgrass family

General

Virginia Military Institute March 8th 1862

My Dear Sister. I rec'd a long letter this morning from Ma. She said the Federals had been in Martinsburg. They were not there when she wrote, but were daily expected over. We having no troops in town. The mail does not go to Martinsburg from Winchester. I don't know whether she will get my letter or not - very probably she will not. She said you and myself must not give ourselves any uneasiness about them all, at home. Ma says - she will get Aunt Liz to stay with her - and try and take care of themselves. Every one confidently expects the Hessians over. When they came before, it was in the night. The citizens had the Court house bell rang. George Murphy and Mr. Hopkins went in a hurry to Darksville. Mr. Young came out to Uncle Williams and stayed that night. Ma seems to have given up all hope of hearing from us soon. Since the mail does not go to Martinsburg. She told me to direct to Winchester to be forwarded to Martinsburg. So you better do the same. Ma says she has heard the scarlet fever is at the University. She is very uneasy about you. You must write to me if you are sick, as Ma told me to go down and see you if you were sick. So write me immediately if you should be sick, which I hope you will not, notwithstanding I want to see you very much and a certain Miss -- at the Institute. I suppose you have not heard of the death of Mr. Dabney Harrison, he was killed in the battle at Fort Donalson. He has fallen in a glorious cause, his friends should not weep. When the Federals came to Martinsburg, Aunt Susan's Polly came over with them. Two men in town arrested her, and sent word to Mr. H. who went to town, and got her, and took her in a great hurry to Winchester, where she is now in prison. I hope her capture will deter ours from running off. No doubt it was an agreeable surprise to Aunt Susan. Mr. H expects to be used roughly by the Federals for taking her out of town. He wrote me if the Yankees used him badly, he would join the army and be revenged. Well Kate I must close. Give my love to Nannie and all other friends. Write me very often, as I am always glad to hear from you. Goodbye yours aff. Brother (signed) John B. Snodgrass

Letter to Katherine Snodgrass-Boyd

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5266

Unit Date 1862 March 29

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards the desire for the cadets to fight in the Civil War and family matters.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Snodgrass family

Transcription

Virginia Military Ins. March 29th 1862

My Dear Sister I rec'd letter from Bose this morning. He was not in the bloody engagement near Winchester. He was not well enough to return to his company, is going back next week. He wrote me that none of his company were killed but heard that Arch Oden and Jack Harrison were missing. I hope

this may not be so. It was only rumored. He does not know whether it is so or not. Ma, I expect is distressed to death about Bose thinking he was in the engagement and knows not but what he may have been killed. If Arch and Jack have been taken prisoner she may perhaps here better - hope she may I have heard today that Genl. Jackson (Stonewall Jackson) has been largely reinforced. Hope it may be true, and that he will be able to drive off the Invaders from the soil of Virginia. If it is true that Genl. J (Stonewall Jackson) has been reinforced no doubt we will soon be able to hear from home, Bose seems to enjoy himself very much in Staunton he has become acquainted with several of the Cadets who have left the Institute and gone down to Staunton but who are now unable to get home. The Cadets are resigning very fast - but new ones come in today - every day - all think they ought to be in the army - any so do I think so - but we can't get off - if we should try. So we will have to remain - and as Genl J (Stonewall Jackson) much says - be soldiers in the next army - after the present one has been killed off. Have the students left the University? We have heard so. Well Kate I must close. Write me soon. I have no news to but you. Goodbye - love to Nannie Your affectionate brother (signed) John B. Snodgrass

Letter to Katherine Snodgrass-Boyd

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5267

Unit Date 1862 April 6

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards family matters and a trip with other cadets to explore a cave outside of Lexington.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Snodgrass family

Transcription

Virginia Military Institute April 6th 1862

My Dear Sister I rec'd your letter several days ago. I would have answered it sooner but I knew you had not received my letter when you wrote - I heard from Bose yesterday. He is well - going back or rather by this time has gone back to his company - he said that Arch and Jack had reported back to their company. I was sorry to learn that Joe McMarran was taken prisoner. He has been sent to Baltimore. I hope he will be treated kindly - his mother and sisters will be much distressed about him. I know how all in Martinsburg and how Ma feels about the boys - hope they will hear in some way that they are safe - I would not be surprised if Grand Ma has gotten home. Communication is of course open between Maryland, and that part of the valley now subject to the Yankee despotism. [?] Delaplane has been over to see them at home I suppose - he would come, if none of Uncle Johns family did. I am sorry to see you are dissatisfied and long to be home. It is of course natural that you should feel in that way since you are deprived of hearing from home - don't despair, it may be a long time, before you can see home again - and it may be a short time - none can tell but I hope when we do hear, all will be right. Bose told me in his letter, that his time in the army would be up - the eighteenth of April. He is coming to see me - on his way down to Capt Pelhorns company - I wouldn't stop much to go down with him - I went yesterday with several boys to explore a cave about 2 miles from the Institute. We went several hundred feet under the ground past through some of the most perfect rooms I ever saw. I believe no one has ever gone to the bottom of it - several boys have gone over today to go farther down in it than we went yesterday - Will H among the number - Well Kate I must close - Goodbye Love to Nannie - write soon Your aff. Brother (signed) John B. Snodgrass

Letter to Katherine Snodgrass-Boyd

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5268

Unit Date 1862 April 29

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards cadet preparations for war after the news "came that the Yankees were about entering Staunton" (Virginia). The letter also mentions that General Stonewall Jackson is "keeping us [VMI cadets] as a reserve body" and that John B. Snodgrass is actively working to resign from VMI.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Transcription

Virginia Military Institute April 29th 1862

Dear Sister I have just read your letter and now will answer it. Since I last wrote to you we have been constantly under a great state of excitement. Last Sunday the news came that the Yankees were about entering Staunton. Academic duties were suspended and our time was devoted to three drills a day - preparing ourselves to meet the invader, should he attempt to drive us away from the V.M.I. Genl Smith told us he intended to lead us out to meet them, if they came a thousand strong. He had provisions cooked for us as to take with us on our way to Lynchburg or Richmond if they came in too large a force for us to meet them. I assure you I was very sorry when I heard they were not coming to Staunton. Genl Smith wrote to Genl Jackson tendering him our services. Genl Jackson replied, that he would keep us as a reserve body. That we could be of immense service to him and that he would call upon us when he wanted us - that we must keep ourselves constantly in readiness. I do hope he will call upon us. It will be the proudest day of my life when we receive marching orders to defend our own homes against the invader. I am not content to stay here, when the Old Dominion - The Mother of Statesmen and heroes is calling so loudly upon her sons to rally to her defense - when this bloody war is over. What a pleasure it will be to every son of Virginia to know that he was so manly and brave as to lay his life upon his countrys altar. Don't be surprised if you should see me in Charlottesville some of these pretty days. I am now waiting to hear from Bose, for permission to resign. Genl S. will not accept my resignation without permission. Why are you so homesick - cheer up. It will not be long before you can get home. If the great battle at Yorktown is fought - the Yankees will leave the valley quicker than they came into it! Genl S told me yesterday they were falling back toward the Potomac - hope it is true. Genl Jackson (Stonewall Jackson) is not at Gordonsville he is in the neighbourhood of Harrisonburg - near the blue ridge. You are I suppose were very much excited when the cannon was sent back to Charlottesville. All were we could not study. Prof. told us they did not expect us to study. The young ladies at the Institute in Staunton came back to Lexington. Six stages loaded with passengers came from Staunton that Sunday evening. Should the Yankees get possession of Charlottesville, do what Miss L thinks best. As for myself I will go immediately to the army. When I wrote to you I could have gotten home by the counties I mentioned but I can't now. They are occupied by the Yankees . Well Kate I must close write to me often - I am always glad to hear from you. Love to Nannie. Goodbye Your affectionate brother (signed) J. B. Snodgrass

Letter to Katherine Snodgrass-Boyd

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5269

Unit Date 1862 May 1

Language English.

Scope and Contents

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards the Corps of Cadets leaving VMI to go to Staunton, Virginia to reinforce General Stonewall Jackson.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Transcription

Va. Mil. Institute May 1st 1862

Dear Kate The Corps of Cadets leave the Institute this morning to go to Staunton t reinforce Genl. Jackson. All of us are in fine spirits - anxious to get a shot at the enemy. I will mail this letter in Staunton. Goodbye. Don't be uneasy about me. I hope you may soon hear the enemy are leaving the valley. Goodbye Your. Aff. Brother John B. Snodgrass C. S. A. Co. D. Corps Cadets

Letter to Katherine Snodgrass-Boyd**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/5270**Unit Date** 1862 May 18**Language** English.**Scope and Contents**

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards war activities in Staunton, Virginia, the march back to VMI, and general news about the war.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Transcription

Virginia Military Institute May 18th 1862

Dear Kate We returned to the V.M.I. yesterday after one of the most toilsome marches of 10 days ever endured by an army. After we left Staunton our hardships began. We marched every day without even a days rest for ten or twelve days always averaging 18 miles and often 20 and 25. One day the day of the battle at McDowell we marched forty miles - marching from early in the morning until 2 or 3 in the night. We drove the enemy before us all the time. Genl Jacksons men were in the rear of the army so we did not get in the fight - the battle was fought by Genl Johnsons Army. I saw Bose very often. He endured the march very well. The Corps of Cadets were nearly all broken down - all were lame with sore feet. I could scarcely walk at times my feet hurt me so much. Numbers of us threw our shoes away and walked barefoot, over some of the loftiest mountains in western Virginia I ever saw. For days we saw nothing but mountains, and often it rained hard - some nights I would lie down and in the morning I would get p with my clothes very wet. The Volunteers all say that march through Western Virginia was the hardest they have endured since the war. After we returned to Staunton we were dismissed. Genl Jackson has gone down the valley, hope he will drive the Yankees across the Potomac. I am anxiously awaiting the result of the great battle near Richmond. If we defeat the Yankees, those in the valley will leave quicker than they came over - if we are defeated, the Yankees will take possession of all this part of Virginia. Then if you remain at your school you can get home - you will then be within the Yankee lines. I saw all the boys - when I was gone - Jack is now Lieutenant in Nadenboushes company. He and Dick [D] are the only ones out of their mess who enlisted again in the company. I would like very much to get down to see you - I wanted to come down whilst I was in Staunton but could not get off. I heard Bose had gone to see you. If he had not I would have come any way. Well Kate I must close. I am both tired and sleepy. Excuse hasty and I have a miserable old pen - Love to Nannie. Goodbye Your aff. Brother (signed) John B. Snodgrass

Letter to Katherine Snodgrass-Boyd**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/5271**Unit Date** 1862 June 8**Language** English.**Scope and Contents**

Written from VMI, Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards general news about the war and family matters.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1860-1869

Virginia Military Institute—Class of 1864

Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Snodgrass family

Transcription

Virginia Military Institute June 8th 1862

My dear sister I recd a letter yesterday from Bose. Whilst Genl. Jackson was in Winchester he succeeded in getting down home. He said all were well, and everything going on right. Grandma has gotten home. She looks remarkably well. Ma and Cousin Fannie have both been to Maryland. Our darkies behaved remarkably well. None of them left. The Yankees tried to persuade them to run away, they would not go.

They told Bose he need not be uneasy, they did not intend to go. Ma has let Nancy live to herself, on account of her good conduct. Mr. Thornburg has rented our farm. So you see Katy everything seems to be going on well - hope it will be so this time. I am sorry you and Nannie could not get home. You are both much better where you are. You won't catch me going home when the Yankees are about there. The New York Herald says Genl. Jackson has been reinforced by 2000 well drilled cadets. They are slightly mistaken in the number, we were not 200 strong. They would arrest me if I were at home. I tried to get Genl. Smith to give me a furlough when the way home was open. He told me to wait until I got a letter. I have not recd any letter - think they might have written to us at any rate. Will got a very short letter from his Pa. Said the Yankees ran by our house like dogs in full run. You had better both stay at the Institute when the session is up. Do you graduate this year? Our school will close about the first of July. I don't know what I shall do yet! I will try and get down to see you when the session closes. Ma told Bose to tell me to stay at the V. M. I. said Uncle John had given her plenty of money. So you see you had better stay at your school when it closes. Bose says his regt. was the first to enter Winchester. He captured 2 new suits of clothes, and eat so many captured sweet meats that it made him sick. He [Jess] and Sam McM. have joined a new company. They are now in Staunton. George Murphy is also there. I suppose Cousin Fannie and Ma were rejoiced when they saw the Yankees running so fast by the house. I should have been. Grandma is delighted I know to get home. I would like to see her. You must not be uneasy about home. All depends upon the fight at Richmond. If the Yankees are whipped there they must leave the Valley. Of course they will be. Give my love to Nannie. I will write to her soon. Write me by return mail. Your brother, John.