

Alexander S. Brown lettersMS.0217

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1846-1848

Title Statement

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Publication Statement

Publisher: Virginia Military Institute Archives

VMI Archives
Preston Library
Lexington, VA 24450
Business Number: 540-464-7516
archives@vmi.edu
URL: <http://www.vmi.edu/archives>

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-06-30 07:02:22 -0400.

Language Usage: Description is written in: Undetermined, Code for undetermined script script.

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MS.0217

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/303

Unit Date

1846-1848

Language

English

Creator

Brown, Alexander S. (Alexander Stuart), ?-1859

Extent

2 items

Physical Location

Manuscripts stacks

Repository

Virginia Military Institute Archives

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Preferred Citation

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Biographical / Historical

Alexander Stuart Brown was born in Wythe County, Virginia. He graduated from Washington College in 1849 and went on to become a lawyer. Brown's father and grandfather also attended Washington College. Brown died on April 8, 1859.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of two letters from Washington College (now Washington and Lee) student Alexander S. Brown to his sister, dated September 20, 1846 and September 7, 1848. The 1846 letter mentions the Cincinnati military class, in which Washington College students participated in military training conducted by VMI staff. The 1848 letter expresses Brown's dissatisfaction with Washington College and a desire to transfer to another school.

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1840-1849

Washington College (Lexington, Va.)—Students

Lexington (Va.)—History

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Description of Subordinate Components

Letter to Fanny P. Brown

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5080

Unit Date 1846 September 20

Language English

Scope and Contents

Written from Lexington, Virginia. The letter mentions the Cincinnati military class, in which Washington College students participated in military training conducted by VMI staff.

Keywords

Lexington (Va.)—History

Washington College (Lexington, Va.)—Students

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1840-1849

Correspondence

Transcription

Lexington Sept 20th 1846

Dear Sister I received your letter on the 15th ultimo, and in compliance with your request, have taken my oen to tell you about your relations & friends in Lexington. I have been at Uncle E's several times and at Cousin Edward's and they are so kind to me that my homesickness has "departed this life". Indeed I do not think I was ever better contented than I am now. I visit only my relations, not having been here long enough to make any other acquaintances. I am getting on finely with my studies, my mark being 6 $\frac{3}{4}$, 7 being perfection. Young Holcombe & myself went yesterday to Aunt Peggy's where we had quite a pleasant time of it. I had the fortune to meet with Mrs. Duke there who had returned from Charlottesville on Friday. Mr. Duke was not with her, being detained in Charlottesville. He is teaching school there, but has only seven scholars. She is quite well and says she likes Charlottesville very much. The Bell for Dr. Ruffner's lecture is just ringing and I must lay my pen aside until I attend that. I will resume my letter as

soon as it is over.

As the morning's lecture was merely introductory to a course of lectures on "Evidences of Christianity" it was very short and did not detain me long and I am again at my desk, so I'll finish what I was at. Cousin Francis is well and says she is very sorry she cannot see you before she returns to the South, which she intends doing Monday week she leaves her two sons, however, at Uncle E's for the purpose of having them educated in Virginia. They are very smart and uncommonly fine looking. Virginia Eskridge must be "cracked" or something else is out of place in her noodle, for I have been there three times and have not been able to get a glimpse of her. Aunt Peggy says she is unwell, but others say she sometimes takes it into her head that she will see no one. I see no temptation whatever to be dissipated in Lexington, but it has confirmed me in the opinion that "men make their own temptations." I have joined the Cincinnati class and the only objection I have to it is it makes my shoulders extremely tired for they make you hold you had up and "walk" as well as stand straight. I like it very much and I know it will improve my figure and will have the effect of rendering my breast less prominent for a cadet was there last session whose breast was like mine and he was almost entirely cured. When I received Pa's letter I was speaking to some of the students about purchasing books, the elder Holcombe said that he had a great many books he didn't need, which he would let me have at a reduced price. I immediately purchased what I wanted. Two weeks hence you may expect that nice letter and if you do not acknowledge that it is well written it will be because you are no judge. I am sorry to say I have no shoes to wear, except my two fine pair. My boots I am keeping for the snow. I told you when I was at home that my thick shoes hurt my feet I had them greased however and wore them to Drill and they hurt my feet so much that for a day or two I could hardly permit a slipper on my foot. You know I have corns. So if you please send me a strong pair of shoes. Have them made large. This is my only request, as for money, I have plenty although my uniform costs me 27 dollars. All are well. Mat unites with me in sending love to you all. Give my respects to Maria & James and believe me to be your affectionate brother. A.S. Brown

Letter to Fanny P. Brown

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/5081

Unit Date 1848 September 7

Language English

Scope and Contents

Written from Lexington, Virginia. Letter expresses Alexander S. Brown's dissatisfaction with Washington College and a desire to transfer to another school.

Keywords

Lexington (Va.)—History

Washington College (Lexington, Va.)—Students

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1840-1849

Correspondence

Transcription

Lexington, Sept 7th 1848

My dear Sister Since my letter to Pa, I have been more dissatisfied, more discouraged. Things here have taken a change for the worse instead of for the better. Our number of Students is still small & no professor has been elected to fill Prof. Ewell's place. The trustees met on yesterday and the result of their proceeding was that they will not meet again until the middle of November to elect a professor of Mathematics. They elected as President a Dr. Jenkins, a minister, about whom I know nothing except that he is president of Lafayette College, Pennsylvania, that there is not an absolute certainty about his acceptance of the Office and very little probability of his entering upon his duties before the first of February. Pro. Ewell will go away in the course of five or six weeks & we will doubtless have Prof. Calhoun as a Mathematician, who is not fit to teach Boys in Arithmetic. I have not yet entered College & do not wish to enter, because I believe to remain here will be a waste of time & money. It is too late to go to Princeton or Yale, but not to go to the University. I have examined the Catalogue & have information obtained from University Students who say that 35 dollars will be sufficient to take me there for one year. I do not now touch Spirits or Cards so that I am not fearful of indulging in either at the University. A great many of my acquaintances in town are going; but what is the greatest inducement is that three students from this College who came here this session, dissatisfied with the place, will go on to the University. One is a classmate of mine, a Mr. Kyle from Botetourt, a very studious, economical & industrious fellow. Another is a young Hogshead from Middlebrook who stands first in the Junior Class who is remarkably smart & economical. As proof of the latter quality I can say that his expenses here last year were 230 dollars only. He studies all the time and is one of the best friends I ever had. He had been on the most intimate terms with me ever since I knew him. He & I will room together here if I go. He will neither touch spirits or play cards & is going with a determination to spend nothing that he cannot help. He declares he won't stay here. The other is a

member of the Sophomore Class- the best Latin scholar in his class- can talk French finely & neither touches spirits or plays cards. They as well as I (if I go) will go with a determination to study hard & to be economical I want to go because I believe I can enter the University with more advantage this year than next & because I think staying here this year will be a great loss to me. Sister, I want you to use your influence with Pa for I want to go & if I do go- depend on it, I shall study hard & spend little. The last I am certain of not depending on my own Economical inclination but upon the restraints thrown upon me by me associations with the boys before mentioned, by my promise & resolutions & the conditions upon which I go, as well by my actual knowledge of Pa's embarrassments. As to the time which elapses between this & the commencement of the session. I can spend that at the University preparing to enter even in Staunton- with Aunt Martha- or I could stay here & study until the session commences there. Pa can best decide as to that and indeed he is the best judge of the propriety of my going to the University at all; but of this I am certain that could he be here and know all the circumstances connected with my staying or going that he would not hesitate one moment to send me away from here. Give my best to Pa, & to sister Jane, Bethe & [?] & believe me to be in great haste your affectionate brother, Alexander

P.S. Be sure to ask Pa to grant my request in relation to this matter. I forgot to see about that gown- one like Mr. Kent's. I would like to have one. If it does not cost more than it is worth. If Sister J. has one made for me, let it be a cheap substantial one - wadded heavily. Tell Sister J. I will write to her by the next mail. Excuse my writing in this letter so much about the University but it is now uppermost in my thoughts. I would rather go to Wythe, I believe, than anywhere's else - if you had a good College there.