

**Guide to the Michael Guinan Letters, 1862, 1864
MS0073**

**The Mariners' Museum Library
at
Christopher Newport University**

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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository: The Mariners' Museum Library

Title: Michael Guinan Letters

Inclusive Dates: 1862, 1864

Catalog number: MS0073

Former Catalog number: CA 106-117

Physical Characteristics: 17 items of correspondence and envelopes

Languages: English

Creator: Guinan, Michael

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michael Guinan was a member of Company A, 128th Regiment, New York Volunteers during the Civil War. All that is known of Guinan comes from his letters. He spent November and December of 1862 stationed on board the USS *Arago* off Newport News, VA. He was then stationed early in 1863 at Camp Parapet outside New Orleans. He participated in the occupation of Louisiana, the siege of Port Hudson, and the retreat from the Red River expedition. Relatives of Guinan lived in New Orleans and supported and fought for the Confederate States of America. Guinan then moved north with his regiment and visited Washington, DC in July, 1864. He then deployed to Fredericksburg, VA and participated in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864, serving under General Phil Sheridan.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection features the correspondence of Michael Guinan to his sister, a friend, and an aunt, from November 1862 through October 1864. There are no letters from 1863, while Guinan was posted in New Orleans. The single letter in the collection that was written in Louisiana was posted from Washington, DC. The letters provide insight into life aboard a ship, the prejudices, and the movement of a Union private in wartime.

In his series of letters dating from November to December 1862, Guinan was stationed on board the USS *Arago* off of Newport News. Through his letters, he describes the Federal ironclad US Steam Battery *Monitor*, the remains of the USS *Cumberland*, and the area around Fortress Monroe. He writes of shore leave at Fortress Monroe and presents a vivid description of the ruins of the city of Hampton, Virginia.

In his second series of letters, dating from 1864, Guinan writes of Independence Day activities in Louisiana, his visit to Washington, D.C., and the movements of his unit. Guinan recounts his participation in combat with Confederate forces in the Shenandoah Valley, the capture of the 8th South Carolina Infantry regiment, and the destruction of agricultural and commercial enterprises around Staunton, Virginia.

The Michael Guinan Letters are organized into 13 folders in ascending chronological order.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Accession number

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1987

Restrictions

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Preferred Citation

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Note to Users

Due to the fragile and rare nature of the collection, researchers are requested to handle the materials with caution and in accordance with prescribed archival practices. When using these materials, please preserve the original order of the collection.

RELATED MATERIALS

A collection of 64 letters by Michael Guinan is held by The Historic New Orleans Collection. These letters are identified as the Michael Guinan Letters, MSS 289, Williams Research Center, The Historic New Orleans Collection. They date from 1862 to 1864, the period of Guinan's service in Louisiana. An on-line finding aid is available by searching the collections catalog at <http://www.hnoc.org/>.

FILE GUIDE**BOX 1** CORRESPONDENCE**Folder 1** Finding Aid**Folder 2** November 1862, CorrespondenceNovember 7, 1862. USS *Arago*

Three-page letter addressed to Eliza Guinan. Guinan writes of the boarding of his unit on the *Arago*; that the ship will sail for Fortress Monroe and wait for the rest of the fleet; and that their final destination is to be Charleston. He describes living conditions on board the ship.

[MS73.01.02.01]

November 13, 1862. USS *Arago* off Newport News.

Four-page letter addressed to Eliza Guinan. Guinan describes the USS *Monitor* as a "raft with a cheesebox on it"; describes the sunken *Cumberland*; and the area around Fort Monroe. He compares the weather in Hampton Roads with New York and states that there are several ironclad vessels stationed in the Roads. [MS73.01.03.01]

Folder 3 November 1862, Correspondence

November 24, 1862.

Two-page letter addressed to Elizabeth Harlowe, a friend. Guinan asks Harlowe for her likeness and mentions death of a doctor in his regiment. [MS073.01.03.01]

Folder 4

November 1862, Correspondence

November 24, 1862. USS *Arago* /Fort Monroe.

Six-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan mentions the death of doctor Van Vleck. He writes of the weather; his pay; describes Newport News; seeing the house “where the rebel General Lee was quartered”; the visit of Abraham Miller on board the *Arago*; and the way the watch is conducted. [MS073.01.04.01]

Folder 5

November 1862, Correspondence

November 29, 1862. USS *Arago* /Fort Monroe.

Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan states that his unit will be going ashore and stay in Fortress Monroe. After weeks on board the *Arago*, Guinan thinks a week or two ashore will help the men avoid sickness. [MS073.01.05.01]

Folder 6

November 1862, Correspondence

November 30, 1862. Fort Monroe.

Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan states that his unit is in encamped in Hampton and describes the area as having some buildings remaining including a church and a graveyard. He writes with humor over forgetting to include wood from General Robert E. Lee’s bed in his letter, his short hair, what they eat, and the doctor’s ministries. [MS073.01.06.01]

Folder 7

December 1862, Correspondence

December 3, 1862. Fort Monroe.

Three-page letter from Michael Guinan to Elizabeth Harlowe, a friend. Guinan gives a brief review of his daily activities; relates going ashore the week before; and states that he does not know where they will be sent. [MS073.01.07.01]

Folder 8

July 1864, Correspondence

July 28, 1864. Algiers, LA, posted in Washington, D.C.

Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan describes Independence Day activities. (Includes envelope) [MS073.01.08.01]

Folder 9

July 1864, Correspondence

July 30, 1864. Washington, D.C.

Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan writes about his visit to Washington D.C. In an addendum, written August 3rd, Guinan states that his unit is on the march about three miles from Frederick, Maryland. (Includes envelope) [MS073.01.09.01]

Folder 10

August 1864, Correspondence

August 27, 1864. Halltown, VA.

Three-page letter from Michael Guinand to Aunt Bridget. Guinan writes that he participated in heavy fighting, against Confederate forces, in the Shenandoah Valley under General Philip Sheridan. [MS073.01.10.01]

- Folder 11** September 1864, Correspondence
September 14, 1864. Berryville, VA.
Four-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan writes of the capture of the 8th South Carolina regiment by the cavalry and the fight near Bunker Hill. (Includes envelope) [MS073.01.11.01]
- Folder 12** October 1864, Correspondence
October 4, 1864. Harrisonburg, VA. Posted in Martinsburg, WV.
Three-page letter from Michael Guinan to Eliza Guinan. Guinan writes that the cavalry destroyed the crops, mills, and tanneries; tore up the railroad track around Staunton; and gave the rebels “a thrashing” at Winchester and Fisher’s Hill. He speculates about returning to Louisiana. (Includes envelope) [MS073.01.12.01]
- Folder 13** Envelopes.
[1862-1864]
This patriotic envelope has an image of the United States flag, the Constitution, and grasping hands. The envelope is addressed to Miss Eliza Grinan of Hudson, Col. Co., New York. The postmark has been removed. [MS073.01.13.01]
[1862-1864]
This plain envelope is addressed to Miss Eliza Guinan of Hudson, Col. Co., New York. The postmark has been removed. [MS073.01.13.02]

SOURCES CONSULTED

Michael Guinan Letters, MSS 289, Williams Research Center, The Historic New Orleans Collection.

Phisterer, Frederick. *New York in the War of the Rebellion*. 3rd ed. Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912. Also available on line at <http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/reghist/civil/infantry/128thInf/128thInfMain.htmhome.rochester.rr.com/ny128th/>

SUBJECTS

United States. Army. New York Infantry Regiment, 128th (1862-1865)
Arago (Schooner : 1861)
Monitor (Ironclad : 1862)
Shenandoah Valley Campaign, 1864 (August-November)
United States-History-Civil War, 1861-1865-Personal narratives
Virginia-History-Civil War, 1861-1865