



## Walter Mason Dickinson Papers

1858-1900

1 box (0.25 linear feet)

Call no.: FS173

### Collection overview

Originally a member of the Massachusetts Agricultural College Class of 1876, Walter Mason Dickinson left after his junior year to enter the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. During his military career, Dickinson saw service in the southwest and as a military instructor at MAC (1891-1896). As a Captain and Quartermaster in the 17th Infantry, he was called to active duty during the Spanish-American War and was killed in action at the Battle of El Caney. He was the first man associated with MAC to die in military service.

This small collection of photographs and letters centers on the death and family of Walter M. Dickinson, the first person associated with Massachusetts Agricultural College to die in combat. In addition to four of the last letters he wrote as he was heading off to war in Cuba, the collection contains three formal portraits of Dickinson at different points in his military career, images of his wife and family, two images of the scene of his death at El Caney, and one of his temporary grave.

### See similar SCUA collections:

[Mass Agricultural College \(1863-1931\)](#)[Massachusetts \(West\)](#)[Military](#)[Photographs](#)[UMass faculty](#)

## Background on Walter Mason Dickinson

Born and raised in Amherst, Mass., a descendant of one of the founders of Hadley, Walter Mason Dickinson entered the Massachusetts Agricultural College in 1873, but left after his junior year to accept an appointment in the Class of 1880 at West Point. Graduating 27th, Dickinson was assigned for duty with the 4th Cavalry, serving at Fort Sill in the Indian Territory and elsewhere in the Southwest and at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis (1887-1889). In 1891, he was granted transfer to the 17th Infantry and detailed as a Professor of Military Science at Massachusetts Agricultural College, but in 1896, he returned to his old regiment as quartermaster, then in garrison at Columbus, Ohio.

With the escalation of the Spanish American War in April 1898, the 4th Cavalry was called into service and sent to Cuba as part of the invasion force. On July 1, one day before the American assault on the nearby San Juan Hills, Dickinson was part of a force that assaulted Spanish fortifications at El Caney. Struck in the right arm, Dickinson was shot a second time while attending to a wounded comrade, and a third and fourth time while

lying a litter, awaiting medical attention. He died of his wounds on July 2, and after initial burial in Santiago, his body was reinterred in Arlington National Cemetery.

## Scope of collection

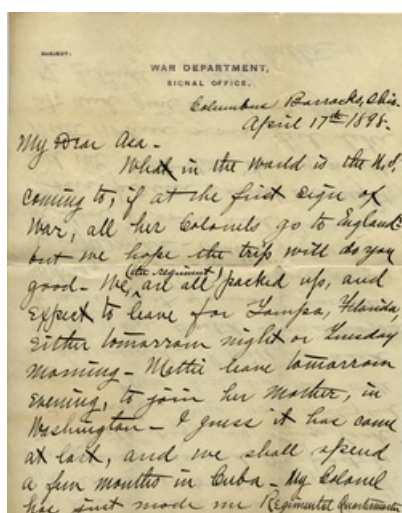
This small collection of photographs and letters centers on the death and family of Walter M. Dickinson, the first person associated with Massachusetts Agricultural College to die in combat. In addition to four of the last letters he wrote as he was heading off to war in Cuba, the collection contains three formal portraits of Dickinson at different points in his military career, images of his wife and family, two images of the scene of his death at El Caney, and one of his temporary grave.



*Walter Mason Dickinson, ca.1880*

## Inventory

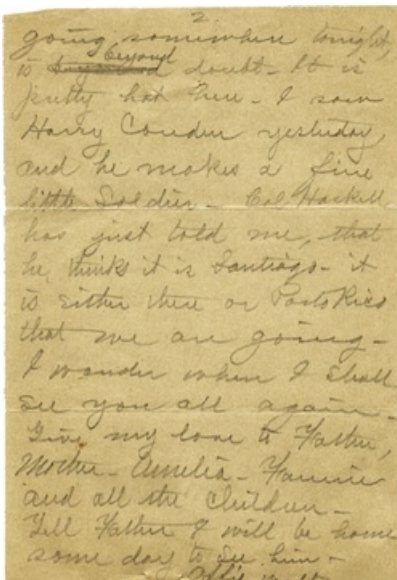
Correspondence	1898	Box 1: 1
▶ Letter from Walter M. Dickinson to Asa W. Dickinson	1898 Apr. 17	



**Contents:** "What in the world is the U.S. coming to, if at the first sign of war, all her Colonels go to England, but we hope the trip will do you good." Walter's regiment is packed and ready to leave for Tampa tomorrow; Mattie leaves tomorrow to join her mother in Washington. "I guess it has come at last, as we shall spend a few months in Cuba. My Colonel has just made me Regimental Quartermaster. so I have had to buy a horse and shall go to the war, mounted. Everybody around the post is in 'Field' rig, so things look like work."

▶ **Letter from Walter M. Dickinson to unidentified recipient (incomplete)**

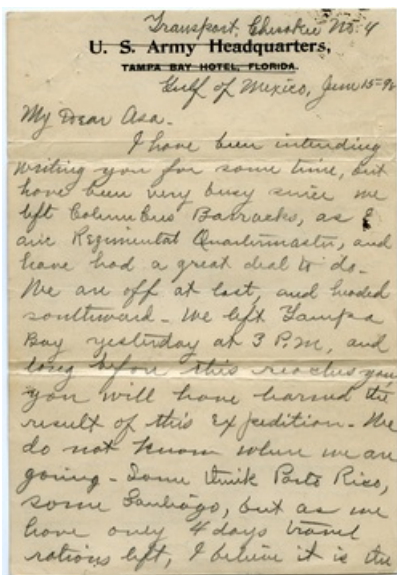
ca.1898 June 6



**Contents:** Page two only: Saw Harry Coudin, who will make a fine little soldier. Believes they are heading to Santiago or Puerto Rico.

### ▶ Letter from Walter M. Dickinson to Asa W. Dickinson

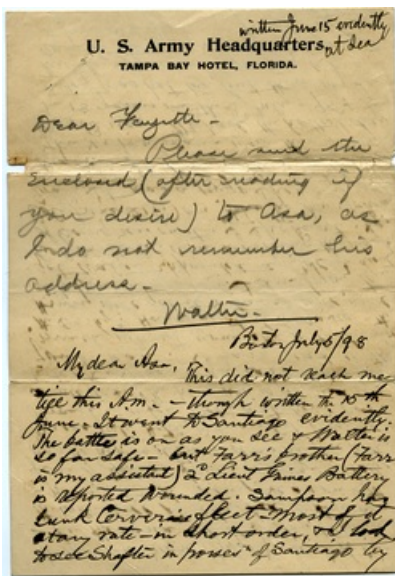
1898 June 15



**Contents:** Writing en route to the seat of war in Cuba aboard the USS Cherokee, acting as regimental quartermaster. Do not yet know whether they are heading to Puerto Rico or Santiago, though he believes it will be Cuba. Traveling in convoy of about 40 ships, including gunboats, with a force of about 25,000 men aboard. Men are badly crowded; delayed in start may have been due to the Navy not having enough ships to escort.

➤ Letter from Walter M. Dickinson to Asa W. Dickinson

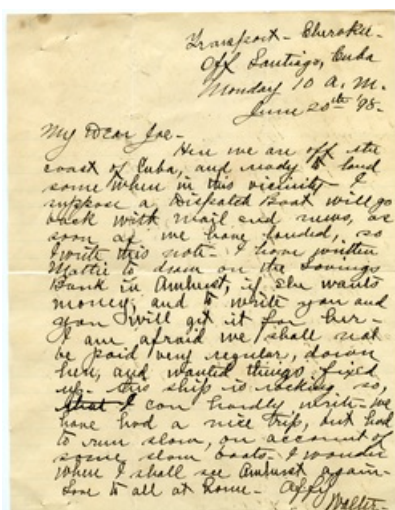
1898 June 15



**Contents:** Instructions to forward letter to Asa Williams Dickinson, when read (see letter from Walter M. Dickinson to Asa Williams Dickinson, June 15, 1898). On same sheet is letter from Marquis Fayette Dickinson to Asa Dickinson: the fighting has begun in Cuba "and Walter is so far safe," though his assistant's brother has been reported wounded. The military will move on Puerto Rico and the Havana, though probably not until the fall. Mattie (Martha) Dickinson has been removed from Washington to Belmar, N.J.: "The poor girl is worried to death." "I am trying to get Walter appointed a Col. or Lieut Col. of Vols., am working the members of Congress on it."

➤ Letter from Walter M. Dickinson to Joseph B. Lindsey

1898 June 20



**Contents:** Off the coast of Cuba and preparing to land. Has set Mattie up so she can draw on the Savings Bank in Amherst if she needs money and will call Lindsey if she needs help.



➤ Envelope containing letters from Walter M. Dickinson

1898



Contents: "Letters of Father Hay about his visit to Fay -- also Letters from Watler Dickinson just before he was killed in Spanish War, 1898. Ought to be given to Dickinsons."

Pamphlet: *Captain Walter Mason Dickinson, 17th Infantry, U.S. Army.* [Amherst, Mass.?] 1898 Box 1: 2

➤ Photographs: Dickinson, Marquis F. (Marquis Fayette), Jr. ca.1900 1 photograph : 14 x 10 cm. Box 1: 3



Contents: Studio portrait of Marquis F. Dickinson, son of Marquis F., Sr., and nephew of Walter M. Dickinson.

➤ Lovell, J. L. (John Lyman), 1825-1903 (photographer): ca.1890 Cabinet card Box 1: 4  
Photographs: Dickinson, Marquis F. (Marquis Fayette), Sr.



Contents: Studio portrait of Mark Dickinson, older brother of Walter M. Dickinson, vignetted.

Photographs: Dickinson, Martha E. ca.1885-1895 3 photographs Box 1: 5

➤ **Palmquist & Jurgens (photographer):**  
**Photographs: Dickinson, Martha E. (St. Paul, Minn.)**

ca.1885

Cabinet card



[Contents:](#) Image of Mattie Otis, wife of Walter M. Dickinson.

➤ **Scholten, J. A. (John A.), 1829-1886**  
**(photographer): Photographs: Dickinson, Martha E.**  
**(St. Louis, Mo.)**

ca.1888

Cabinet card



[Contents:](#) Image of Mattie Otis, wife of Walter M. Dickinson.

➤ **Hearn, C. W. (Chas. W.) (photographer):**  
**Photographs: Dickinson, Martha E. (Old Orchard,**  
**Me.)**

ca.1895

Mounted  
albumen print



**Contents:** Image of Mattie Otis, wife of Walter M. Dickinson, in high style with fur collar.

Lovell, J. L. (John Lyman), 1825-1903 (photographer)	ca.1880-1895	3 photographs	Box 1: 6
➤ <b>Pach, G. W. (photographer): Photographs:</b> <b>Dickinson, Walter Mason (New York, N.Y.)</b>	ca.1880	Cabinet card	



**Contents:** Image of Dickinson in cadet's uniform, possibly at or shortly after time of graduation from West Point in 1880.

➤ **Hearn, (Chas. W.) (photographer): Photographs:**  
**Dickinson, Walter Mason (Boston, Mass.), in 17th**  
**Infantry Regiment uniform**

ca.1891

Cabinet card



**Contents:** Image of Dickinson in uniform, probably at time when he was acting as military instructor at Massachusetts Agricultural College (1891-1896).

➤ **Hearn, C. W. (Chas. W.) (photographer):**  
**Photographs: Dickinson, Walter Mason (Amherst,**  
**Mass.), in army uniform**

ca.1895

Mounted  
albumen print



**Contents:** Image of Dickinson in uniform, probably at time when he was acting as military instructor at Massachusetts Agricultural College (1891-1896). On verso: "1st Lieut. Walter M. Dickinson, shot at El Caney Cuba July 1/98, died of his wounds July 3 /98."

Photographs: Farms

ca.1898

3 photographs

Box 1: 7

➤ **Hearn, (Chas. W.) (photographer): Photographs:**  
**Asa's old farm in Amherst, Mass., before any**  
**improvements**

ca.1885

Mounted  
albumen print





**Contents:** Image of Dickinson in uniform, probably at time when he was acting as military instructor at Massachusetts Agricultural College (1891-1896).

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➤ **Hearn, (Chas. W.) (photographer): Photographs:**  
**Unidentified farm house (Amherst, Mass.)**

ca.1895

Silver  
developing-out  
print



**Contents:** Farm house, probably in Amherst, Mass., and probably associated with the Dickinson family.

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➤ **Hearn, (Chas. W.) (photographer): Photographs:**  
**Farm and fields (Amherst, Mass.)**

ca.1895

Silver  
developing-out  
print



**Contents:** View of unidentified farmland, presumably in Amherst and presumably associated with the Dickinson family. On verso: "Bad prints, but good negatives."

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➤ **Photographs: Group portrait of Marquis F. Dickinson, Sr., Marquis F. Dickinson, Jr., Walter M. Dickinson, Charles Dickinson, and Asa W. Dickinson (clockwise from center front)**

ca.1890

Mounted  
albumen print

Box 1: 8



**Contents:** Portrait of Marquis Dickinson, three of his sons, and grandson (by Marquis, Jr.).

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➤ **Photographs: Scene of Walter Mason Dickinson's death (El Caney, Cuba)**

ca.1898

Mounted  
albumen print

Box 1: 9



**Contents:** View of the landscape from near the site of Walter M. Dickinson's death. Dickinson was the first man associated with Massachusetts Agricultural College to die in combat.

➤ **Photographs: Scene of Walter Mason Dickinson's death (El Caney, Cuba), with draped American flag**

ca.1898

Mounted  
albumen print

Box 1: 10



➤ **Photographs: Two young women**

ca.1858

Ninth-plate  
ambrotype

Box 1: 12



**Contents:** Image of two unidentified young women, presumably from the Dickinson family; ambrotype case intact, but the original backing for the image has been disrupted.



**Contents:** Image of temporary grave of Walter M. Dickinson, killed in action in El Caney, Cuba, in July 1898. Dickinson was the first man associated with Massachusetts Agricultural College to die in combat.

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## Administrative information

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### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Gift of Alex Kingsbury, Jan. 2016 (2016-012).

### Digitized content

The collection is available digitally in Credo.

### Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, Jan. 2016.

### Language:

English

### Copyright and Use ([More information](#) )

*Cite as:* Walter Mason Dickinson Papers (FS 173). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

## Search terms

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### Subjects

- Dickinson, Asa Williams--Photographs
- Dickinson, Charles--Photographs
- Dickinson, Marquis F. (Marquis Fayette), 1814-1901--Photographs
- Dickinson, Marquis F. (Marquis Fayette), 1840-1915--Photographs
- Dickinson, Martha E.--Photographs
- Dickinson, Walter Mason, 1856-1898--Photographs
- Dwellings--Massachusetts--Amherst--Photographs
- El Caney (Cuba)--Photographs
- Farms--Massachusetts--Amherst--Photographs
- Lindsey, Joseph B.
- Soldiers' bodies, Disposition of--Cuba--Photographs
- Soldiers--United States--Photographs
- Spanish-American War, 1898

#### Contributors

- Dickinson, Walter Mason **[main entry]**

#### Genres and formats

- Ambrotypes
- Correspondence
- Photographs

#### Link to similar SCUA collections

**Mass Agricultural College (1863-1931)**

**Massachusetts (West)**

**Military**

**Photographs**

**UMass faculty**