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Ellen and Mary E. Ware Papers

1862-1893

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Ellen Ware and her step-daughter Mary E. lived in North Hadley, Massachusetts during the mid to late nineteenth century. This collection of letters documents first the older generation's reaction to the draft during the Civil War, and second the younger generation's daily activities, including their education, social events, and the growing movement towards temperance.

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Background on Ellen and Mary E. Ware

Ellen and Lauriston Ware were married in 1862 and lived in rural North Hadley, Massachusetts for their entire married life.

Laruriston was born in Buckland, Massachusetts in 1827 and married his first wife, Sarah Culkins in 1854. She died shortly after giving birth to their two daughters.

Ellen, originally of Colraine, Massachusetts, had two known siblings, Charly and Sarah. Sarah and her husband, Frank, lived in Oxford, while Charly and Philinda lived in Charlestown. The entire family was stirred by the institution of the first draft in 1862. Charly had a very difficult time trying to raise the three hundred dollars needed to be exempt, and he eventually had to register. He was lucky, however, and was not called to war.

Lauriston's daughter, and Ellen's step-daughter, Mary E. was born around 1860. She grew up and attended school in North Hadley. She was educated on a variety of subjects ranging from grammar to geography. She also had many friends, including the two Smith children, originally of North Hadley, who moved to Saginaw City, Michigan in 1874. Willie, born in 1857, and Evelyn, born in 1860, maintained a close relationship with Mary throughout their time living in Michigan.

In 1877, Mary relocated to New Haven, Connecticut where she attended school and worked nights teaching, eventually becoming a rubber worker. In an 1880 census Mary was identified as a border with a family in New Haven. She always considered North Hadley home, though, and because her parents continued to reside there she was able to maintain her connection with the town.

Willie Smith was a sickly young man who was often taken ill for days and months at a time with headaches, sore throats, and colds. He attended some school but worked most of the time. He purchased small amounts of land in November of 1877 and began growing various berries and grapes, and also drove teams of horses. He was extremely lonely most of the time, and wished to be back in North Hadley. He had few, if any, friends and did not participate in many social activities in Michigan. Willie, however, did associate himself with something in Michigan: the growing temperance movement. Even though he never joined formally, he pledged himself to a life of sobriety.

His sister, Eva, born on January 8, 1860, enjoyed life in Michigan. She attended school and learned Latin, geography, orthography, arithmetic, French, and algebra, and even taught a class of 40 students. She partook in many social activities throughout her time in Michigan, including dances, soldiers reunions, and holiday celebrations.

Another friend of Mary E. Ware, George H. Clark, attended lectures in 1877 on the benefits of a life free of alcohol. Clark was an assistant to Silas R. Cooley, a jeweler and watchmaker, who was located in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Scope of collection

Of the 43 letters addressed to the Wares, six are addressed to Ellen from her sister Sarah, her brother Charly, and sister-in-law Philinda. The other 37 are addressed to Mary E., and come from the Smiths in Michigan, or George H. Clark in Northampton, Massachusetts.

The early letters, dated 1862-1864, contain information about the children and professions of the family members. In a letter marked "private" Sarah describes a recipe for a medication to cure a potentially fatal condition that is plaguing Ellen. In addition to daily activities there is a significant discussion surrounding the draft for the Civil War. Philinda writes to Ellen often of her feelings of worry that either of their husbands will be called to serve. Sarah even expresses her feelings of guilt that she wants to keep her husband safe, calling herself "most unpatriotic." Not only do the women openly discuss their feelings, Charly contributes as well, but his comments relate to the impossibility of raising the money to be exempt from the war.

In the later letters, the earliest in 1873 and the latest in 1877, the focus moves to a younger generation. The group that is corresponding are all between the ages of 15 and 20 during the time that their letters were written. Eva, Willie, and George write about their daily lives, school, work, and social activities. From the letters and books they read a great deal can be extracted on the level of education that these teenagers received. Because the letters are addressed to Mary little is known of her, however, much can be learned about her friends.

Evelyn goes into depth about the classes she is taking, and spares no detail describing her young teachers and their school day. She also discusses social activities that she has or will be attending, including Fourth of July celebrations and the Centennial. As Eva grows up, the progression in her penmanship is visible and she begins to write more about teaching others rather than learning herself.

William is a more complex person who never quite adjusted to his move to Michigan. He spends most of his time ill and alone, and he has very few, if any, friends. He is taken for days and weeks at a time with colds and severe headaches that are so painful he can barely see. He describes remedies that he tries to relieve his symptoms, but none seem to offer a more permanent solution. He is a student for a short period of time, but later moves on to agricultural work where the land and his horses occupy him.

George writes to Mary E. often about events in Northampton, including social and news worthy activities. He discusses the town he lives in and the work he is performing there. From his letters a good sense of Northampton can be gained. George and Willie

both discuss the temperance movement that is beginning to find popularity in the U.S. Willie discusses the movement in Michigan, noting that there were over 1,600 members in his community alone.

Overall, the collection is a window into the lives of young people in America in the late 19th century. Along with detailed descriptions of education and social events, a significant amount of gossip is communicated too. The featured writers are young and involved in intimate relationships with one another, so they discuss various topics, such as girls at school, sneaking in past curfew, and which of their friends should marry.

Inventory

Letters

1862 Mar 23-Aug 28

Box 1: 1

Letters

1863 Mar 18

Box 1: 2

Letters

1863 Aug 9-Sept 3

Box 1: 3

Letters

1873 May 23-1874 Dec 17

Box 1: 4

Letters

1875 Jan 3-31

Box 1: 5

Letters, Program

1875 Feb 27- Apr 15

Box 1: 6

Letters

1875 May 2

Box 1: 7

Letters

1875 July 11-Sept 12

Box 1: 8

Letters

1875 Nov 28

Box 1: 9

Letters, Photographs

1876 Feb 5-Mar 28

Box 1: 10

Letters

1876 Nov 12

Box 1: 11

Letters

1877 Jan 21-Feb 4

Box 1: 12

Letters

1877 Mar 8-Apr 10

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Letters

1877 Aug 11

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Letters

1877 Nov 9-18

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Letters, Trade Card

1877 Dec 3-9

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Letters, Program
1877 Dec 30
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Sunday School Booklet
1893
Box 1: 19

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Virginia Goldsbury in February 2007.

Letters discovered in a wall during renovations of a house in North Hadley, Massachusetts.

Language:

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Search terms

Subjects

Hadley (Mass.)--History
Massachusetts--Social life and customs--19th century
Michigan--Social life and customs--19th century
Temperance--United States--History--19th century
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865
Ware, Ellen
Ware, Lauriston
Ware, Mary E.
Women--Education--United States--History--19th century
Women--History--19th century

Contributors

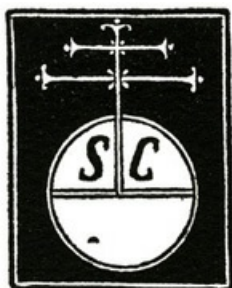
Ware, Ellen [main entry]
Clark, George H.
Smith, Evelyn, b. 1860
Smith, William, b. 1857

Genres and formats

Letters (Correspondence)

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