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Charles Wellington Clapp Papers

1882-1886

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Born on Jan. 4, 1863, and raised in Montague, Mass., Charles Wellington Clapp entered Massachusetts Agricultural College as a freshman during the fall 1882. Shouldering the standard coursework in agriculture and engineering, Clapp graduated with the class of 1886 and went on to a career as a civil engineer in Greenfield, Mass.

Written by Clapp to family members, mostly his sister Mary, during his undergraduate years at MAC, the 31 letters in this collection provide a lighthearted and engaging glimpse into the academic work and extra-curricular activities of a typical early student at Mass Aggie. Noteworthy among these letters are early references to football being played at the college and an

effective hand-drawn map of campus, both from 1882.

Background on Charles Wellington Clapp

Charles Wellington Clapp was born on Jan. 4, 1863, to Richard and Eunice Amelia (Slate) Clapp, the youngest of their six children, one of whom died as an infant. Both of Clapp's parents had been teachers, but now the family farmed in Montague, Mass. Clapp arrived at Massachusetts Agricultural College in the fall of 1882, an enthusiastic member of the class of '86. His college career was a full one: he served as editor-in-chief of the 1886 *Index* (the MAC yearbook published by the junior class in January 1885) and was also involved in many college clubs and organizations, including the College Shakespearian Club, the College Christian Union, the Washington Irving Literary Society, the Natural History Society, the Rifle Association, the Sporting Club, football, and baseball. He was involved in music, singing first bass in the Howlers and playing guitar in the orchestra. During his senior year, he was class historian, and he was second-place winner of the Grinnell Agricultural Prize and the Hills Botanical Prize. One of just a dozen members of the class of 1886 to graduate, Clapp and eight of his classmates returned to campus in 1936 for their fiftieth class reunion, at the time a near-record for a fiftieth-reunion turnout at the college.



MAC Class of 1886, on entrance

Clapp worked as a civil engineer for rail companies in Greenfield and Northampton, and later in Tampa, Fla., and Utica, N.Y., and was married three times. On April 12, 1894, he married Evelyn A. Metcalf in Providence, Rhode Island, with whom he had two children, Alfred, who died in 1898 at age 3, and Roger, born in 1899. Evelyn died in 1902 at the age of 40 from uremia. Clapp's second marriage, on October 18, 1905, was to Julia Marie Robbins, who died in 1932. He then married Clara J. Wetherbee. Clara J. Clapp died on January 31, 1947, at age 73, and Charles a little more than a month later, on March 5, both in Utica.

Scope of collection

This collection of 31 letters span Charles Clapp's four years at Massachusetts Agricultural College, with a few written earlier. Clapp wrote most of them to his sister Mary Elizabeth Clapp, with a few of the earlier letters addressed to "Marie," apparently his eldest sister, the zoologist and marine biologist Cornelia M. (Maria) Clapp, who taught at Mount Holyoke.

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Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

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Genres and formats

Letters (correspondence).



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