



Independence Seaport Museum

Guide to the Tipton Family Papers

Creator: Willam Tipton and other members of his family

Dates: 1862 – 1868

Quantity: 3 folders (64 items)

Call Phrase: Tipton Papers

Provenance: Purchase. ISM number 2004.017

Processed by: Megan Hahn Fraser

Scope and Content: The Tipton Family Papers consist principally of the letters William Tipton sent home to his wife and sister in Philadelphia during his service as an engineer in the United States Navy aboard the ships *Circassian* and *Sacramento* during the Civil War.

The *Sacramento* was charged with searching for Confederate privateers, with her chief target being the *Alabama*. On May 1, 1864 he writes to his wife, Carrie, from Cape Town:

...[W]e are after the Alabama and she left here some 3 weeks ago fore now body nowes whare but supsed she is gone to france for repares and the Capton don't now what he will do go after her or not There is a rebel steamer the Tuscuylusy laying in Port about 30 miles from here wether we will stay here and watch her is undesident yet she is not ase large as the Alabama but large enofgh to do mischeaf.

Tipton's ship does go after *Alabama*, but is too late to engage her in battle. From Cherbourg, France on July 8, he writes, "We wer gust 8 days behind the alabama when we got here this is where tha had the fight I do wish it had off bin us that would bin glory enoufgh for me."

Tipton's loneliness for home and for news of his family and friends are frequent topics in his letters. He does not write a great deal about his work or life on board ship. He makes

a few brief comments about the places the ship stops in port, but generally he focuses on personal matters.

We now have bin to Eingland France Germenny Ireland Brascile Spane Portugal Afracay all the Canery and Westren Ilands I never thought I would sen hafe I have sean I supose it wont do me enny harm as there is a grate meany would give considerable to take this trip but I am tierd ove it I want to go home (July 29, 1864).

Tipton often chides Carrie for not writing enough and entreats her to look after her health and that of their infant son. "I would love to see you and he but I must wate with pations untill old Abe seas fit to let me see you" (September 13, 1864). Finances are also a concern to Tipton, and he asks his wife to reply to confirm that she has gotten the money he sends. News of Carrie's ill health and subsequent death reaches Tipton in the spring of 1865. In his letter of May 5, he writes to his sister Virginia "Jennie" Hopkins, "Oh this cruel war. I ever will blame my self ever going in the Navy and leaveing my dear angel wife." The last letter from Tipton is dated August 11, 1865 upon his ship's return from her voyage, and is concerned with arrangements for the care of his son.

The collection also contains several letters from Carrie Tipton at home in Philadelphia, Jennie Hopkins and others, including one from Carrie's doctor specifying her dying wishes, and one partial letter (signature page missing) dated December 15, 1867 describing William Tipton's death several days before. Twelve cartes de visite of William Tipton, his wife, his son, his second wife and his sister are also included in the collection.

Related materials: Transcripts of most of the letters in the collection, which were made by the seller, are housed in the library's reference files. Please note that these transcripts are not literal, and they have several errors in them, but researchers may find them useful for reference.

Container list:

Folder 1. William Tipton, letters sent, 1862 – 1865

Folder 2. Other correspondents, letters and alienated envelopes, 1862 – 1868

Folder 3. Cartes de visite