BIOGRAPHY OF

Born in 1843, Joseph Aplin Martin (usually called “Aplin”) spent the early part of his life in Claysville, Ohio, a town located in Westland Township of Guernsey County. At the age of nineteen, he joined up with the 97th Regiment of Ohio Volunteer Infantry, which was organized on September 2, 1862 at Zanesville, Ohio. Except for a stay at a convalescent’s camp in Nashville, Martin was with the 97th until his death in USA General Hospital at Tullahoma, Tennessee on July 2, 1864. He was initially buried in Murfreesborough; his remains were later sent to New Concord, Ohio in 1866.

The 97th OVI participated in only three battles prior to 1864: Perryville, Kentucky; Stone River, Tennessee; and Mission Ridge, Tennessee.

Martin writes about the monotony of soldiering; most of his time was spent on guard duty, picket duty, and marching to new positions. Indeed, often in his letters he claims to have nothing to write about, and once wrote that he had is so well that he then weighed the most he ever had in his life! However, this tedium was to change. In May of 1864, when the regiment entered Georgia, it took part in six battles, and three more the following month. Too busy to write, Martin’s last letter is dated May 3, 1864, two days before the regiment was to enter this series of conflicts. On a day when the regiment was not engaged in any apparent fighting, July 1, 1864, Martin was shot in the leg and taken to Tullahoma, where he died the following day.
The history of the collection, itself, is as intriguing as its contents. In 1932, the collection was offered to the Library of Congress, which turned it down because of a lack of funds, and by The Atlantic Monthly, due to a backlog of similar material. The letters pertaining to the attempted sales of this collection are not part of the collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

The collection consists of letters written between 1847 and 1878, centering around the time of the Civil War, 1862-1864. The majority of the letters are addressed to Martin’s mother, Eleanor Kelley, letting her know that he was “still in the land of the living.” The letters chart Martin’s path as he moved with his regiment through Kentucky and Tennessee, passing through Louisville, Nashville, Murfreeborough, Chattanooga, and Knoxville. Martin never really mentions participating in any battles, though he frequently mentions happenings on picket duty, such as Confederate soldiers surrendering at the risk of being shot by their own troops. He also wrote about the dullness of camp life, complaining that if fellows from back home who didn’t want to sign up would only come down they could see how easy it was.

Also included in the collection are the letters regarding the return of Martin’s remains to Ohio, and letters to Eleanor Kelley after her son’s death from her sister, brother-in-law, nephews, and nieces. A few letters date from before the war. A photograph purported to be Martin is also in the collection.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION

These records are organized into the following series:

Series I: Letters from J.A. Martin to Eleanor Kelley
Series II: Other letters by J.A. Martin
Series III: Letters to J.A. Martin
Series IV: Other Letters to Eleanor Kelley
Series V: Other Letters
Series VI: Miscellaneous

Abbreviations within content list:

N/A

RELATED MATERIALS

Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 1861-1865, volumes 1 and 2

The Army of the Cumberland by Henry M. Cist, 1882
Roster of Ohio Soldiers, 1861-1866, Volume VIII

(Both the atlas and the roster are located in Archives and Special Collections. The book can be found in the general stacks of Alden Library.)

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Restrictions: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Ohio University Libraries.

Preferred Citation: Researchers are requested to cite the collection name, collection number, and the Ohio University Libraries, in all footnotes and bibliographical references.

Accession Number: #87-68

Provenance: The Ohio University Archives received the collection in June 1987 from the company of Charles Apfelbaum Rare Books and Collections.

Property Rights: Ohio University retains all property rights to the collection.

Copyrights: Ohio University retains all copyrights unless retained by the donor, other correspondents, or other artists.

Photoduplication: Ohio University will entertain requests to photocopy reasonable amounts of material from the collection for the convenience of individual researchers.

Processing: Christopher R. Leonard processed the collection in December 1987.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note both the location and box numbers shown below.

CONTAINER LIST

Box/Folder  Description

Series 1: Letters from J.A Martin to Eleanor
Kelley

1 / 1
One undated letter, no address
August 1862, 2 letters

1 / 3
September 1862, 5 letters
October 1862, 2 letters
November-December 1862, 6 letters
January-March 1863, 11 letters
April-May 1863, 6 letters
June-July 1863, 8 letters
August-October 1863, 8 letters
November-December 1863, 6 letters
January-March 1864, 9 letters
April-May 1864, 5 letters

Series II: Other letters by J.A. Martin
13 To J.B. Walker, February 9, 1863
14 To Joseph Kelley, June 19, 1863

Series III: Letters to J.A. Martin
15 Nancy S. Martin, September 31, 1856
16 Mary E. Martin, March 10, 1859
17 Alice Martin, April 22, 1859
18 Alice Martin, April 29, 1862
19 James Brimner, May 14, 1862
20 William P. Gamble, August 23, 1863
21 Eleanor Kelley and John Perry, June 30, 1864
22 Alice Martin, January 12
23 Eleanor Kelley, no date

Series IV: Other Letters to Eleanor Kelley
24 J.H. Gamble, August 8, 1859
25 Alice Martin, July 10, 1864
26 Clara Roberts, July 12, 1864
27 Tullahoma Hospital, July 30, 1864
28 Alice Martin, August 24, 1864
29 William P. Gamble, September 4, 1864
30 Tullahoma Hospital, November 22, 1864
31 William Earnshaw, June 4, 1866
32 William Earnshaw, June 22, 1866
33 Eliza E. Gamble, July 5, 1866
34 (Ed?) Bell, February 16, 1867
35 Theodore B. Ballard, July 3, 1867
36 Eliza Gamble, July 29, 1868
37 Eliza Gamble, April 17, 1870
38 Eliza Gamble, January 28, 1871
39 J.H. Gamble, August 30, 1874
40 J.H. Gamble, September 11, 1878
41 March 24

**Series V: Other Letters**
42 Eleanor Kelley’s request for her son’s bounty, March 1, 1879, and apparent reply, March 20, 1879
43 Samuel Martin, brother of S. Martin, August 23, 1847
44 Anonymous consolation poem to Eleanor Kelley, no date
45 Illegible letter

**Series VI: Miscellaneous**
46 Picture of J.A. Martin and a sprig of cedar sent home in a letter