

**Michael H. Leary Letters**  
**1861-1863**  
**MS.1986.043**

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## Summary Information

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<b>Library Unit</b>	Archives and Manuscripts Department
<b>Creator</b>	Leary, Michael H.
<b>Title</b>	Michael H. Leary letters
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1861-1863
<b>Extent</b>	1.0 Linear feet (1 Box)
<b>Location</b>	Level 2, Irish and Irish Americans Collections
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Michael H. Leary was an Irish-American from Boston, Massachusetts and soldier in Union Army during the Civil War. This collection is composed of correspondence from Leary to Ellen (Nellie) Desmond, mostly written from Virginia. The collection begins in 1861 while Leary was stationed in Washington D.C. and continues through 1863. The final letters Leary wrote from a hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The letters provide accounts of Leary's life in the Ninth Regiment of the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War as well as his desire to reunite with Nellie.</p>

### Preferred Citation

Identification of Item, Box Number, Folder Number, Michael H. Leary Letters, MS.1986.043, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Finding aid prepared by Inventoried by Elizabeth Delaney, 1988 Summer. Revised by Sarah K. Nytroe, Fall 2002. Revised by Kelly Webster and Lindsay Skay Whitacre, Fall 2011. This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit.

### Access Note

Collection is open for research.

### Copyright Restrictions

Though the copyright interests have not been transferred to Boston College, all of the items in the collection are in the public domain. For further information, see the section on copyright in the Burns Library's Rules for the Reading Room.

### Source of Acquisition

MS.1986.043. Unknown. Acquired by the repository prior to 1986.

### Accession Date

January 1, 1986

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## Abbreviations

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ALS = Autograph Letter Signed

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## Biographical Note

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Michael H. Leary, a union soldier, was employed as a printer in Boston, Massachusetts prior to enlisting with the Irish-American dominated Ninth Massachusetts Regiment on June 11, 1861. The Ninth Massachusetts Regiment spent the months of May and June at Camp Wightman on Long Island in Boston Harbor. Encamped at Emmart's Farm until after the Battle of Bull Run, the Ninth Regiment moved to Arlington Heights, Virginia for a brief time. The winter was spent at Miners Hill, Virginia until March 10, 1862. Serving alongside the Fifth Corps during the Peninsular Campaign, the Ninth Regiment was engaged at Hanover Court House, Mechanicsville, Gaines Mill, and Malvern Hill in Virginia. During the Second Battle of Bull Run, Antietam, and Fredericksburg, the Ninth Regiment remained in reserve. The winter of 1862-1863 was spent at Falmouth, Virginia.

Leary deserted the Ninth Massachusetts Regiment on January 28, 1863, but returned and was eventually transferred to the Thirty-Second Massachusetts Veteran Volunteer Regiment when his three-year term with the Ninth expired. Daniel G. McNamara, a former Lieutenant with the Ninth Regiment and military historian, details the furloughs granted to the soldiers of the Ninth Regiment during the month of February. McNamara recalls that some men overextended their stays at home, "With the exception of a few desertions and 'stay-overs' the honorable action of the men was an example that would put to shame the above mentioned commissioned officers (Daniel G. McNamara, 277)." Leary was most likely one of these stragglers. His letters indicate a great desire to be with Nellie, so he may have remained at home in Boston longer than allowed.

In 1863, the Ninth Regiment was engaged in Pennsylvania at Gettysburg as well as at Chancellorsville in Virginia. After spending the winter in quarters at Bealton Station, Virginia, the regiment participated in the Wilderness Campaign in May 1864. For the 170 men who re-enlisted from the Ninth Regiment, as well as other Massachusetts Regiments, the Wilderness Campaign continued with action at Spotsylvania, North Anna and Bethesda Church in Virginia. The Thirty-Second Regiment participated in the Siege of Petersburg from June 1864 through April 1865 and was part of the pursuit of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox. Assigned to Company H as a Private, Leary was mustered out of the army on June 28, 1865, receiving his final discharge on July 11.

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## Sources for Biographical Note

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The History of the Ninth Regiment, Daniel G. McNamara (Boston: EB Stillings & Co., 1899)

The Irish Ninth in Bivouac and Battle, M.H. McNamara (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1867)

'The Fighting Ninth' for Fifty Years and the Semi-Centennial Celebration, Frank J. Flynn (Boston: s.n. 1911?)

Commanding Boston's Irish Ninth: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Patrick R. Guiney, 9th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Christian G. Samito Ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998)

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## Scope and Content Note

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This collection of forty-six letters, dated from July 1861 through August 1862, is addressed from Michael H. Leary to Ellen (Nellie) Desmond. Also included within the collection are several envelopes addressed to Nellie. One postmark is dated 1863, indicating Leary continued to correspond with Nellie beyond the context of this small collection.

Arranged chronologically, most of the letters were written on Union stationery. Some letters have faded handwriting, some of the paper is fragile, some letters contain holes.

# Collection Inventory

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## Series 1: Letters, 1861-1863

**Box**  
1

### Series Description

Leary's correspondence primarily relates the activities of the 9th Regiment including preparation to march, scouting expeditions, engagement with the Confederates, military reviews before General McClellan and President Abraham Lincoln, and picket duty. Leary offers, in response to Nellie's questions, commentary on the Trent Affair. The majority of the letters were penned from Miner's Hill, Virginia. Other letters were addressed from Washington, DC, and Yorktown and Richmond, Virginia. The other significant subject of Leary's letters focus on his relationship with Nellie. Leary expresses continued desire for the war to end that he might return to her. He speaks of their material exchanges – a photograph, money, clothing – as well as the possibility of Nellie moving to New York with the family she works for. The final letters Leary penned from a hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Nellie Desmond, undated  
[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2174\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2174)

**Box 1**

**Folder 1**

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Nellie Desmond, 1861 July 2  
[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2175\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2175)

**Box 1**

**Folder 2**

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Ellen Desmond, 1861 July 19  
[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2176 \]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2176)

**Box 1**

**Folder 3**

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Ellen Desmond, 1861 July 12  
[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2177 \]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2177)

**Box 1**

**Folder 4**

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Ellen Desmond, 1861 July [no day]

**Box 1**

**Folder 5**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2178\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2178)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Ellen Desmond, 1861 July 30

**Box 1**

**Folder 6**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2179\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2179)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Ellen Desmond, 1861 August 16

**Box 1**

**Folder 7**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2180\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2180)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Ellen Desmond, 1861 September 1

**Box 1**

**Folder 8**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2181\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2181)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Ellen Desmond, 1861 September 22

**Box 1**

**Folder 9**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2182\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2182)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Nellie Desmond, 1861 October 4

**Box 1**

**Folder 10**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2183\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2183)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Ellen Desmond, 1861 October 10

**Box 1**

**Folder 11**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2184\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2184)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Ellen Desmond, 1861 October 17

**Box 1**

**Folder 12**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2185\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2185)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Nellie Desmond, 1861 October 20

**Box 1**

**Folder 13**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2186\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2186)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Nellie Desmond, 1861 October 27

**Box 1**

**Folder 14**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2187\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2187)

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to  
Nellie Desmond, 1861 November 7

**Box 1**

**Folder 15**

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2188\]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2188)



Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1861 November 16 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2189">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2189 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 16</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1861 November 24 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2190">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2190 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 17</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1861 November 25 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2191">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2191 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 18</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1861 December 8 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2192">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2192 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 19</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1861 December 19 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2193">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2193 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 20</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1861 December 21 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2194">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2194 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 21</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1861 December 31 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2195">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2195 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 22</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 January 5 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2196">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2196 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 23</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 January 14 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2197">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2197 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 24</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 January 20 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2198">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2198 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 25</b>

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 January 22 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2199">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2199 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 26</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 January 28 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2200">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2200 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 27</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 February 2 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2201">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2201 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 28</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 February 10 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2254">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2254 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 29</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 February 16 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2255">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2255 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 30</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 February 23 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2256">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2256 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 31</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 March 1 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2257">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2257 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 32</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 March 8 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2258">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2258 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 33</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 March 11 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2259">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2259 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 34</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 April 3 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2260">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2260 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 35</b>

Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 April 18 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2261">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2261 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 36</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 April 29 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2262">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2262 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 37</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 May 10 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2263">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2263 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 38</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 May 19 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2264">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2264 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 39</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 May 25 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2265">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2265 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 40</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 June 5 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2266">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2266 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 41</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 June 8 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2267">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2267 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 42</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 June 20 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2268">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2268 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 43</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond, 1862 August 3 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2269">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2269 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 44</b>
Autograph letter signed by Michael Leary to Nellie Desmond (2 items), 1862 August 17 <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2270">[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2270 ]</a>	<b>Box 1</b>	<b>Folder 45</b>

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Envelopes addressed to Nellie Desmond, circa  
1861-1863  
[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2271 \]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2271)

**Box 1**

**Folder 46**

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Envelopes addressed to Nellie Desmond, circa  
1861-1863  
[\[http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2272 \]](http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2272)

**Box 1**

**Folder 47**

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