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Groot Family Papers, 1836-1886

1 box

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REPOSITORY

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DONOR INFORMATION

The collection was purchased from Michael Brown Rare Books, LLC, in June 2012.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James P. Groot was born circa 1820s-1830s in Schenectady County, New York, and worked as a teacher in Schenectady in the late 1840s and early 1850s. In 1857 he ventured to the West, settling in Effingham County, Illinois, before relocating to St. Louis, Missouri, a few years later. Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, he enlisted as a private in the 6th Iowa Infantry but was discharged after suffering sunstroke. He died February 24, 1863, of congestion of the brain at Lawson General Hospital in St. Louis. Among his siblings were Dick Groot, Maria Groot, and Rachel Groot. On December 29, 1853, Rachel Groot married Barney Mull in Watervliet, New York. On December 29, 1869, she married Charles Troy in Effingham County, Illinois.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists primarily of Groot family correspondence. Most of the letters were written by James P. Groot. Notable content includes three letters signed Rachel Mull to her sister Maria—dated September 2, 1855, April 5, 1856, and February 25, no year—that describe the abusive relationship with her husband, Barney Mull. The collection also includes 12 Civil War-era letters signed James P. Groot describing affairs in St. Louis and his military service in the 6th Iowa Infantry.

Reference File

2012 Typescript biography of James P. Groot and description of the collection, compiled by Michael Brown Rare Books, LLC.

Folder 1

- 1836 June 9 Unsigned letter, Schenectady, to Mrs. Wm. O.H. Orlop. “. . . I hardly know what advice to give you in matrimony as I have had so little experience myself that I don’t think that I have the competence to do justice. . . .if it ever happens to be my lot to get united in wed-lock I hope that I will never make myself miserable as our poor[?] sister has for he is certainly not a man worthy of such a person as she is[?] due. . . .”
- 1842 Mar 5 Letter signed C.P. Groot, Albany, to James A. Pearse, Waterford, New York. Mentions that he has not heard from brother James recently.
- 1847 May 24 Letter signed C.D. Groot, Dist. No. 8, Watervliet, to sister Miss Maria Groot, Albany. Mentions the health of family members.
- 1847 July 7 Unsigned letter fragment, Dist. No. 8, Watervliet, to “Brother Sweet.” Discusses his application to run a school.
- 1849 June 4 Letter signed James P. [Groot], Schenectady, to “Dear Sister M” [Miss Maria Groot]. “. . . We called on Rachel and found her some wors[e] than when I left here on Saturday afternoon. . . . Doctor Vedder called on her this morning and bled her and poot [put] a blister on her breast. . . .”
- 1849 Sept 1 Unsigned letter, Schenectady, to “Dear Sister” [Miss Maria Groot]. Explains to her some mathematical rules relating to fractions.

Folder 2

- 1850 Jan 12 Letter signed Helen A. Lansing, Normal School, Albany, to Maria. Discusses her studies.
- 1850 Mar 23 Letter signed Helen A. Lansing, Lisha’s Hill, [New York], to Miss Maria Groot, Schenectady, New York. Discusses her school and mentions Dan Quackenbush and Obadiah Quackenbush. Also mentions that Dan Cockenbush is going to marry Miss Rice.
- 1855 Sept 2 Letter signed Rachel Mull, Port Tobacco, [Maryland], to her sister Maria. “. . . I had a girl [slave] but some have such indulgent masters that she ran away as a great many do when whipt. . . . it would astonish you to hear and see this plaise fore me sertin it is so bad I cannot describe it to you of all drinking gambling horing as I must say. . . .” Discusses bad relationship with her husband.

- 1856 Feb 5 Letter signed Rachel Mull, Port Tobacco, [Maryland], to her sister. “. . . Barney is very tite. . . he thinks it is not worth the while getting so many different dresses and bonnets. . . .”
- 1856 Apr 5 Letter of [Rachel Mull], Port Tobacco, [Maryland], to her sister Maria. Discusses her husband Barney’s temper and his mistreatment of her. Asks her sister to burn her letters after reading them.
- 1856 Apr 18 Letter signed Rachel Mull, Port Tobacco, [Maryland], to her sister Maria. Mentions that drinking is the ruination of many, and states her fear that her husband will start drinking. Invites her sister to visit her.
- 1856 May 11 Letter of [Rachel Mull], Port Tobacco, [Maryland], to her sister. Mentions that James had asked forgiveness for the business he had been in. Mentions attending church.
- 1856 May 15 Letter signed Rachel Mull, Port Tobacco, [Maryland], to her sister Maria. Mentions that she has a bad cold. Mentions that she expects her and Mr. Jones to visit her on their wedding tour, and asks her what sort of man he is. Offers to buy her bed and bedspread.
- Folder 3**
- 1856 May 18 Letter signed R.D. Groot, Ballston Cen[ter], to his sister. Mentions that he checked property records in a government office in Albany. Mentions John Pearse.
- 1856 Sept 1 Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], Schenectady, to his sister. Criticizes their brother-in-law Barney’s decision to go to California and leave his wife, Rachel, behind. “. . . I am some what of an opinion that Rachel has not got the person or man for a bosom friend that she flattered herself with when the Honey moon was visable. . . .”
- 1857 Mar 9 Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], Schenectady, to his sister. Suggests that they may be able to store their things at Capt. Green’s. Mentions that he plans to go west in the spring. Mentions the death of Garret Van Vranken.
- 1857 Apr 6 Letter signed J.P.G. [James P. Groot], Schenectady, to his sister. Mentions that Barney has some thought of going west with him. Mentions Matthew Winney and Theodore Van Valkinburgh.
- 1857 Apr 7 Letter signed Jas. P. Groot [James P. Groot], Schenectady, to his sister. Discusses schools in Schenectady and their prospects as teachers. Mentions Mr. Chadsey and Abram Van Vranken.

- 1857 Apr 12 Letter signed James P. Groot, Schenectady, to his sister. Mentions furniture that he left at Capt. Green's. Mentions his imminent departure for Omaha, Nebraska Territory. Mentions that Dr. Benj. Stickles [Dr. Benjamin Stickles], a dentist, is going to marry one of Harry H. Davis' daughters. Mentions James Pearse.
- 1857 Apr 21 Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], Effingham, Effingham Co., Ill., to his sister. Describes his journey to Effingham via Niagara Falls and Chicago, including a description of the bridge over the Niagara River. Criticizes the manner in which the local German population grows corn and wheat.
- 1857 June 10 Letter signed Jas. P. Groot [James P. Groot], Effingham, to his sister Maria. Mentions Abe Van Vranken and Nicholas Barhydt. Mentions planting corn, potatoes, oats, and white beans.
- 1857 July 28 Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], Effingham, to his sister Maria. Mentions Theodore Van Volckenburg and cousin Jim Pearse. ". . . it is uncertain how long our copartnership will last as things don't go altogether to suit me with Barney as he is not the person I took him to be. . ."
- 1857 Aug 24 Letter of [James P. Groot], Teutopolis, Effingham County, Ill., to his sister Maria. Has bought 40 acres of woodland, a span of horses, a harness, a wagon, plows, etc. to commence farming. Mentions Jim Pearse.
- 1857 Aug 26 Letter signed Rachel Mull, Effingham, [Illinois], to her sister. Mentions wagons passing on the National Road to and from Kansas, Ohio, and Cincinnati. Mentions that her neighbors are not close, and she is lonely and afraid when her husband is away at work. Mentions Jess and Jim Pearse.
- Folder 4**
- 1857 Oct 19 Unsigned letter of [James P. Groot], Teutopolis, Effingham Co., Ill., to cousin Jesse. Describes farming and his crops.
- 1857 Dec 7 Unsigned, incomplete letter of [James P. Groot], Teutopolis, Effingham Co., Ill., to his sister. ". . . I have once more resumed my seat as a school teacher in an humble log cabin. . . in Cumberland County. . . [Rachel] has got the worst disposition that I have met with in a great many years travel. . . [Barney] has got the meanest disposition of any person that I have had any thing to do with. . ."
- 1858 Mar 17 Unsigned, incomplete letter of [James P. Groot], Cornton, Cumberland Co., Ill., to his sister. States that he intends to visit the land near Ewington held by the Burdsall family to determine if it is worth buying. Mentions

James Vosburgh, Richard Pearse, Jim Pearse, Dr. Elwood, Dave Hegamen, Thomas Shannon, Garret Clute, and John V.A. Lansing.

Folder 5

1858 Apr 16

Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], Cornton, Cumberland Co., Ill., to his sister Maria. Mentions the new house and lot he bought and the salary he will receive for his teaching position. Mentions Martha Burdsall, David Hegamen, Rich. Pearse [Richard Pearse], and Jim Pearse.

Folder 6

1858 Oct 14

Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], Ewington, Effingham Co., to his sister Maria. Mentions prices for crops. Mentions the death of Jas. Vosburgh [James Vosburgh]. Briefly describes the state fair at Central City. Mentions Thomas Shannon and criticizes his brother Dick.

1858 Nov 20

Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], Ewington, to sister. Mentions the state of the crops in the area and hunting wild game. Mentions David Haggamen and Mariah Vandenburg.

Folder 7

1860[?] June 3

Unsigned letter of [James P. Groot], St. Louis, to his sister Maria. “. . . Rachel feels very lonely & dispirited. You ought to write to her and act more like sisters. . . I have not met with that success since I came west that I had anticipated when I left my native state as the times have been growing worse & harder than I have ever seen before. The times are worse than they were in 1847. Speculation fast living and extravagance are the cause of all such changes every 7 or 8 years. . . .”

1860[1861?] June 25

Unsigned letter of [James P. Groot], St. Louis, to his sister and Jessee. Mentions that Barney and Rachel moved back to Illinois. Mentions prices for corn and hogs. Mentions a Civil War incident in St. Louis that led to deaths. “. . . God only knows when this disturbance will have an end. I believe it operates harder or has greater affect[?] on the border slave states than it has on the free states. All kinds of Business is completely prostrated the Blockade affects this city wors[e] than any other in the west. . . .” Mentions that he plans to go into the hog trade in Illinois. Mentions Jim Pearse, Jim Watkins, and his brother Dick. (Letter is written on pro-Union illustrated stationery.)

1860 Aug 28

Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], St. Louis, to sister M. & J. Mentions Jim Pearse, his brother Dick, and Rich. Pearse [Richard Pearse]. Mentions that his sister Rachel and Barney have moved to St. Louis and have opened a restaurant. He has chosen to engage in cement roofing. Mentions that he will vote for Abraham Lincoln.

Folder 8

[1861]

Fragment of letter of [James P. Groot]. "Please direct your letter to Capt. Galland when you do write but you need not write until you receive a paper as I hardly know where we will be next week as we may receive marching orders at any day at 1 hour notice notice to march into Missouri against the cessionists [secessionists]. Several companies out of our Regt. left here today & had a collision with several [word unclear] cessionists at a small town called Athens in Missouri."

circa 1861-1865

Business card of John A. Smithers, undertaker, 113 Chestnut Street, between 5th and 6th, St. Louis, Mo. Handwritten note on back of card reads, "Dr. Scollays patent airtight Deodorizing Burial case & Box & disinterment for Soldiers \$35.00."

1861 May 28

Letter signed James P. Groot, St. Louis, to his sister, Jesse, and aunts. ". . . I am as yet living in the state of Mo. or City of St. Louis but no [know] not how long I will remain here as cessionism [secessionism] is growing very warm and makes it very unpleasant for a person born in a free state to live in or among slave state[?] at the present time. . . . The appearance of the many military companies parading the streets & the numerous tents at different points (of observation) on the outskirts of the city & around the arsenal [arsenal] would make it appear that there is a foe in the land. . . ." (Letter is written on illustrated stationery.)

1861 June 24

Letter signed James P. [Groot], St. Louis, to his sister. Mentions aunt Alida Brower and briefly discusses fishing. Barney and Rachel have moved back to Illinois. ". . . thousands of people left here early in the season fearing that the city might be burned by the cessionists [secessionists], but it stands as firm as a rock as yet for the stars & stripes float over it yet in proud relief. . . ." (Letter is written on pro-Union illustrated stationery.)

1861 July 30

Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], Camp Warren, near Burlington, Iowa, to his sister, Jesse and all. Describes his enlistment in the Union army and camp life. Mentions Joseph Smith and Mormon settlement at Nauvoo, Illinois.

Folder 9

1861 Sept 7

Letter signed James PG [James P. Groot], Lafayette Park [Lafayette Park], St. Louis, to dear brother, sister and all. Briefly discusses his enlistment in the Union army in Iowa and his unit's encampment in Lafayette Park, St. Louis. Includes typed transcript of letter.

[1861] Sept 11

Letter signed James P. Groot, St. Louis, to a sibling. Mentions that he hopes to visit his sibling if he can get a pass from his company or the captain.

- 1862 May 1 Letter signed James P. Groot, St. Louis, to his sister, Jesse, aunts, and all. Mentions that he was discharged from the army after getting sunstroke in the arsenal, and that he has now opened a restaurant in Bremen. Briefly explains why he joined the army. Includes typed transcript of letter.
- 1862 May 7 Letter signed James P. Groot, St. Louis, to friends. Mentions a dreadful spell or spasm that he suffered in January. “. . . The times are very hard here & business almost suspended in consequence of the war agitation or the secession movement of 7 of the southern slave holding states. The preparations for a general collision on both sides looks war like. . . .” (Letter is written on illustrated stationery.)
- 1862 Oct 24 Letter signed Jas. P. Groot [James P. Groot], St. Louis, to his sister, Jesse, and all. “. . . This war has caused a wonderful change in all kinds of businesses in the city of St. Louis: Business has been very dull here with all persons except those that have had Government Contracts or government business. . . .” Mentions that Rachel and Barney have an adopted boy about 18 months old. Mentions prices for charcoal, corn, wheat, etc.
- 1862 Nov 26 Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot], St. Louis, to his sister. Mentions the vastness of land under cultivation in the West. Mentions the daily arrival of regiments at St. Louis. Mentions that he is under a doctor’s care, and that this is the first time he has tried any medicine. Inquires about the whereabouts of James Watkins and family. Includes postscript dated November 30.
- 1863 Feb Letter signed James [James P. Groot], St. Louis, to his sister & Jesse. “. . . . This war has caused Produce & all kinds of Groceries to advance almost one half their usual prices & some things beyond the reach of the laboring class of People. What a moth, a curse & a pest to a civilized country & a nation like our own a civil war is. The middle & New England states dont or cant feel its severe pangs like the north-west or border states. . . . My prayers are that the Federals may conquer & become invincible. . . . God grant that we may see our country once more free. . . . To day I made an application for a situation as Register in one of the many Hospitals in the city. . . .”
- 1863 Mar 4 Statement signed Michael O’Brien, hospital steward, Lawson General Hospital, St. Louis, Mo., regarding the death of James P. Groot from congestion of brain.
- Folder 10**
- 1874 Aug 31 Letter signed J.N. Gwin, Effingham, Illinois, to Mrs. Maria Pearse. “By request of your sister Mrs. Troy, I write to you to give you a legal

explanation of why she desire[s] you to sign and execute the quit claim deed. . . .”

- 1880 Jan 16 Letter signed Rachel Troy, Effingham, Illinois, to her sister [Maria?].
- 1880 Apr 16 Letter signed Rachel Troy, Effingham, Illinois, to her sister. Discusses family news. Mentions Jim Pearse.
- 1880 June 30 Letter signed Charles Troy, Effingham, Illinois, to his sister. Sends her a hair switch, and invites her son James to visit him.
- 1880 Dec 20 Letter signed Asa L. Ricker, Alfred, [Maine], to Samuel Clark. In response to Clark’s letter, he provides information on several recorded deeds.
- 1886 May 8 Letter signed E.A. Green, Troy, to “Dear Friend.” “. . . Mary was taken with typhoid fever which ended in pneumonia and her life went out with it. . . .”
- no year Feb 25 Letter signed Rachel D. Mull, Port Tobacco, [Maryland], to her sister Maria. Tells her sister that if she [Maria] sees her [Rachel’s] husband, Barney, not to tell him that she [Maria] received a letter from her [Rachel]. “. . . do not tell him one word I have wrot[e] ever to you. . . . I love him he is very ruff when he is angry and has a very bad temper but I think I ought to look over that he does most every thing to pleas me and he is always sorry fore it I perhaps am some times to blame. . . . I do not suppose he would have any one know our trubbles for the world but I have confided them in you Maria. . . .fore my sake say nothing about what I have wrote and burn this up and the envelope and if god is willing I hope and pray you will show nothing or tell nothing. . . .”
- no year Mar 20 Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot] to his sister. “. . . I had intended to have went to Ewington to day to see Rachel & Barney but the rain has prevented me. Barney has opened a shop at that place. . . .” Mentions the deaths of Stephen Carhart’s wife and Charles Barhydt. “. . . direct your letters after the first of April to Effingham station Effingham Co.”
- no year Aug 30 Unsigned letter of [James P. Groot], Ewington, Effingham Co., Ill., to his sister. Mentions that he has been elected secretary of the Temperance Society. Mentions Jas. O. Watkins [James O. Watkins] and Jim Pearse.

Folder 11

no date

Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot] to his sister. “[St. Louis] is a very filthy place especially the business portion, but the upper & retired part is beautifully laid out & arranged with much taste. . . . The fish caught in the Mississippi & the adjacent streams dont look much like the Mohawk

Bass Pike & Purch. I have seen catfish large enough to swallow a boy say four or five years old & then have room enough left at his sides for a bushel breakfast. . . .”

Folder 12

no date

Letter signed James P. Groot to his cousin Jessee. Asks about family and friends. Mentions James Watkins.

Folder 13

no date

Unsigned letter fragment. “You would have been surprised if you had been here this last season to have seen the number of people that came from every state in the Union & from Canada to purchase land. . . . The agent for the company at Effingham is a Yorker & a mighty clever fellow he is to[o]. He got married this fall and went to Oswego after his wife, his name is Van Allen. . . . I hope you and Jim Pearse will get married. . . .”

Folder 14

no date

Letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot] to a sibling. Mentions that he is teaching, and that he skinned a deer, a possum, and several rabbits. Mentions that his new address is Cornton, Cumberland County, Illinois.

Folder 15

no date

Fragment of letter signed James P. Groot to a sibling. Begins, “I have some thought of going to New Orleans this fall or winter as I have got tired of teaching. . . .”

Folder 16

no date

Fragment of letter signed JPG [James P. Groot] to unknown individual. Begins, “Ask Jim Pearse if he ever intends getting married & if he does if he wont have the kindness to give me an invite to the wedding. . . .”

Folder 17

no date

Fragment of letter signed J.P. Groot [James P. Groot] to his brother. Begins, “You stated to me that Eddy Watkins wanted to know about. . . .”

Folder 18

no date

Fragment of letter signed J.P. Groot. “. . . . I had my head so full before I left that I neve[r] thought about it or I should have paid you before I left. . . .”

Folder 19

no date

Envelope addressed to Mr. Jessee G. Pearse, Vischer Ferry, Saratoga County.