

**CW/VFM-65: *Montgomery C. Meigs***

Letter from Meigs to General Samuel Wylie Crawford and copies of Meigs letters made by Crawford

Meigs moved to Pennsylvania when he was a boy, and initially attended the University of Pennsylvania. Later he was appointed to the US Military Academy and he graduated in 1836. He then received a commission as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the 1<sup>st</sup> US Artillery, but he did the most service with the Corps of Engineers. During this time, he helped build Fort Mifflin on the Delaware River and Fort Wayne on the Detroit River. He also worked to make navigational improvements on the Mississippi with Robert E. Lee.

Just before the beginning of the Civil War, Meigs (along with Erasmus D. Keyes) was charged with formulating a plan to relieve Fort Pickens in Florida. Then, on May 14<sup>th</sup> of 1861, he was appointed colonel of the 11<sup>th</sup> US Infantry. On the following day, Meigs was promoted to brigadier general and Quartermaster General of the Army. He established a reputation for being efficient and honest. He was the first one to fully understand the importance of logistical preparations in military planning and, while he was Quartermaster General, supplies moved over long distances with great speed. In addition to this, he was in command of Grant's base of supplies at Belle Plain, VA in 1864. He also held command of a division of the War Department at the time of Early's raid, and was responsible for supplying Sherman's troops at Savannah and two different locations in North Carolina. He was brevetted to major general on July 5, 1864.

Since he was a staunch Unionist, he was the one that suggested that Lee's property be used as a burial ground; hence the creation of Arlington National Cemetery. He was in the honor guard at Lincoln's funeral. He supervised plans for the new War Department building, the National Museum, the extension of the Washington Aqueduct, and for a hall of records. After his retirement in 1882, he became architect of the Pension Office Building; now home to the National Building Museum. He was a regent of the Smithsonian Institution, a member of the American Philosophical Society, and one of the earliest members of the National Academy of Sciences. When he died, he was buried with high military honors in Arlington National Cemetery (where his son is also buried) because he had served his country and government so faithfully.

**Letter from Meigs to General Crawford:**

2/7/1884- In this letter, Meigs recounts to the general selected entries from his diary that he kept during the Civil War. Overall, he discusses meetings w/ Lincoln and his plans for the upcoming struggle that was soon to ensue; specifically the relief of Fort Pickens and other fortifications.

Original document: 8pp.

Letters from Meigs Copied by Crawford:

**Letter to William H. Seward, Secretary of State-** Account of the military situation as he sees it.

**Letter to the Editor of the Tribune-** Manuscript account of the Relief of Fort Pickens. Directed to the Editors of the Tribune by

**Letter to Brigadier General JS Totten, Chief Engineer-** Meigs was ordered by Lincoln to go on the Expedition of Colonel Brown in order to reinforce Fort Pickens. This document contains a detailed description of the time shortly before, as well as the expedition itself. As it turns out, the ship encountered a heavy north east wind and it blew them off course, hence they landed at Fort Taylor instead; which did have some secession sentiment.

Original document: 14pp.

**Keywords:** Union - East; Letters; Army - Artillery; Soldiers – Commissioned Officers

**Location:** Civil War Vertical File Manuscripts, Special Collections & College Archives, Musselman Library at Gettysburg College.

**See also:** [Civil War Sources in Special Collections](#)