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## University Grey's letters tell story of Civil War

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## University Grey's letters tell story of Civil War

Fa Tv Li Er Cc SM Pr Sr



Richard C. Bridges' family visited campus Oct. 26 to formally present the collection to the library.

A little more than a century and a half ago, a University of Mississippi student left Oxford to fight in the Civil War. The journey sent him hundreds of miles from Mississippi — a home to which he would never return.

During those years, Richard C. Bridges' only way to communicate with loved ones was through letters, and now those letters have resurfaced.

Recently, the family of Bridges donated 27 letters written by the Crystal Springs native during his time with the University Greys to the UM Department of Archives and Special Collections. The final letter in the collection was written by the nurse who cared for Bridges. The soldier passed away from a wound sustained in the Battle of the Wilderness in Staunton, Va., in June 1864.

"He was a student at Ole Miss, so that is where the letters belonged," said Pat Owen, great-great niece of Bridges. "We felt like they couldn't go anywhere else because they are a vital part of Ole Miss history."

The family, who found the letters in the attic of their great aunt's home, realized the value of the correspondence and felt it necessary to share with others.

"These letters are a part of our family history and a part of who our family is," Owen said. "Ancestry is who you are, and I believe this collection portrays just that."

After the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, Bridges joined the University Greys at UM. Like many other Mississippians, he left home and school in 1861 to fight with the Confederate Army. Many of the soldiers were young men, and Oxford was the farthest place they had ever been from home.

Bridges' letters were written in various situations and locations throughout the Civil War. Topics in his correspondence include health, worries, holidays, lack of receiving letters, homesickness, battles and wound history.

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"These letters are an extremely rare and marvelous gift," said Jennifer Ford, head of archives and special collections and associate professor at UM. "They give us the opportunity to see the humanity of someone caught in a conflict bigger than themselves."

During Bridges' time in the war, he fought in Seven Pines, Ball's Bluff, the Seven Days Campaign, Manassas, Second Manassas, Gettysburg and the Battle of the Wilderness. The Battle of the Wilderness, during which Bridges sustained his fatal injury, is believed to be the bloodiest campaign in American history.



Viewing of this collection will begin in the spring semester. For more information, [click here](#).

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