

Guide to the Doctor and Mary Tarbell Collection

The History Center in Tompkins County
110 North Tioga Street, Suite 204A
Tompkins Center for History and Culture
Ithaca, NY 14850
607-273-8284
www.thehistorycenter.net
archives@thehistorycenter.net

Collection Number V-5-4-7
Accession Number 81.60

Updated 2021

See also:

Civil War Collection – V-16-1-2
Cowdry Collection – V-3-4-5
Sophronia Bucklin Collection – V-1-1-4
Ervin M. Dunbar Civil War Papers – V-2-6-10
Grand Army of the Republic Collection – V-2-6-18
Civil War Military Portraits – FA 41
Charles W.W. Cole Collection – V-63-8-8
Hinckley Family Collection – V-63-9-8
Ostrom Civil War Letters – V-64-2-1
Anson Knettles Civil War Correspondence Collection – V-64-9-8
School Records Collection, Groton – V-10-3-6

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The collection contains the papers of Doctor and Mary Tarbell, as well as one of their children, George Tarbell. The Tarbell family lived in Tompkins County from the early nineteenth-century through the middle of the twentieth-century.

Doctor Tarbell was born on May 16, 1838 in Groton, New York. Doctor—Doctor was his first name—served in the US army for the length of the American Civil War. In May 1861, he enlisted in a New York State volunteer regiment as a sergeant, rising to the rank of brevet major by the time he was mustered out of service in July 1865. Doctor fought at some of the most important battles in the war's eastern theater, including Antietam, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. He was captured by confederate forces at Winchester, Virginia in September 1864 and was held at Libby, Salisbury, and Danville prisoner of war camps until February 1865. On a leave of absence after being paroled, Doctor returned to Ithaca to marry Mary Lucy Conant.

After the war, Doctor studied at Cornell University, was elected clerk for Tompkins County, and worked as an agent in the typewriter and insurance industries. He died on September 19, 1895.

Mary Lucy Conant was born on May 3, 1838 in Charlton, Massachusetts. Mary studied at the Groton Academy, where she and Doctor met before the Civil War. Doctor and Mary had three children: George Schuyler Tarbell, Bertha May Tarbell Hubbell (1872-1957), and Clarence Doctor Tarbell (1878-1940). Mary died on March 25, 1899.

George Schuyler Tarbell was born on July 15, 1868. He graduated from Ithaca High School and studied law at Cornell University. His law practice's office was at the Ithaca Trust Company Building on Tioga Street, the current site of the History Center on the Ithaca Commons. During his career, George served as Bankruptcy Referee in US District Court and as Ithaca's city attorney. He was also active in civic organizations in Tompkins County. George married Grace Louise Jones in 1893. They had three children. George died on July 8, 1935.

Two volumes and three folders document various phases of Doctor's military service and postbellum career, as well as his personal life from the prewar and war years. The two volumes, both diaries, hold a mix of wartime writing: In the first, some of the pages are lists of supplies, others have descriptions of people, and a few have narrative entries. The second diary has an account of the Battle of Gettysburg, seeming written soon after the battle; Doctor, who served in the commissary, comments with pride on the wounded being well supplied. It also has a more traditional series of diary entries about his being stationed in Virginia in October 1863 and January 1864. These entries detail a quieter period: weather, personal letters sent and received, but some skirmishes are described. In the folders there are eight letters sent to Doctor from his immediate family, Mary, and others. The fourteen letters from Doctor to Mary are nearly evenly divided between prewar and wartime correspondence. His service papers include materials related to leaves and promotions. There are letters about and a menu and a bill for a regimental reunion that Doctor, the association's secretary and treasurer, organized in 1889. There are also a dozen letters that deal with Doctor's position as county clerk, as well as state Republican party politics, after the war.

Three folders are largely composed of Mary's schoolwork at the Groton Academy in the 1850s and 1860s. There are close to 50 "exercises" on varied themes, like an "exercise on paraphrasing" and an "exercise in extended simile," as well as essays on topics like Time, Hope, and the French language. There are also many creative pieces, some of them collaboratively written, including poems and jokes. Among the creative work is a handwritten amateur newspaper that Mary created called "The Budget of Wisdom."

There are numerous report cards from George's education in Ithaca's public schools, and a few documents that relate to his time at Cornell University, among them an essay titled "A Ramble through the Ithaca Gorge."

CONTAINER LIST

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Folder Number</i>
Doctor: Diary (1861)	Envelope 1
Doctor: Diary (1863-1864)	Envelope 2
Doctor: Correspondence (1859-1860, 1862-1863, 1865)	1
Doctor: Military and veteran records (1863-1865, 1889)	2
Doctor: Political and professional papers (1867-1889)	3
George: October 1887 issue of <i>Eastman's Journal of Practical Education</i>	4
Mary: School compositions (1856-1861)	5
Mary: School compositions (1856-1861)	6
Mary: Personal correspondence and notes (1850s-1860s)	7
George: School papers and professional correspondence (1877, 1885, 1887-1889, 1892)	8
Family: Photographs, photocopied	9
Doctor: Diary, photocopied (1863-1864)	10
Doctor: Research materials	11

Funding for this finding aid update was generously provided by

*THE GLADYS KRIEBLE DELMAS
FOUNDATION*