Waller, Alfred R.

Alfred and Annie Waller letters
1899–1902

Abstract: The Alfred and Annie Waller letters consists of approximately fifty letters spanning the period between 1899 and 1902. The letters housed in this small collection discuss the separation and divorce of Alfred and Annie ("Nancy") Waller of Watertown, New York.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 595
Creator: Waller, Alfred R.
Title: Alfred and Annie Waller letters
Inclusive Dates: 1899–1902
Extent: 0.1 linear feet (50 items)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 595, Alfred and Annie Waller letters, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
Shelving Summary: Box 1: Shelved in SPEC MSS manuscript boxes (1 inch)
Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/
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Biographical Note

Alfred R. Waller was born in September 1865, to Alfred and Laura Waller. Waller grew up in Watertown, New York, with his future wife Annie, whom he married in about 1888. After approximately eleven years of marriage, in November 1899, Annie Waller pursued separation and, later, divorce from her husband. Alfred and Annie Waller had two daughters, Nadine and Louise, who remained in their mother’s custody.

Alfred Waller was employed by the International Paper Company, which was incorporated in Albany in 1898 as a merger of seventeen pulp and paper mills located throughout New York. With offices in Philadelphia and Baltimore, Alfred Waller was required to travel frequently throughout the mid-Atlantic states for his sales job with International Paper. Alfred Waller often wrote letters to his wife and legal counselors from paper mills and offices in Piercefield, White Plains, and Manhattan, New York; Baltimore, Maryland; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Alfred Waller’s brother, Tom T. Waller, headed the sales department of the New York division of the International Paper Company.

Letters in this collection indicate that Mr. and Mrs. Waller lived together in Piercefield, New York, for a time, but that their primary residence was in Watertown, New York. In addition, the Waller's had a seasonal residence in Sackets Harbor, New York.

Sources:

Information derived from the collection.
The Alfred and Annie Waller letters consists of approximately fifty letters spanning the period between 1899 and 1902. The letters housed in this small collection discuss the separation and divorce of Alfred and Annie ("Nancy") Waller of Watertown, New York.

The letters are arranged by recipient and housed in three folders, including the following: F1 Letters to Annie ("Nancy") Waller, F2 Letters to Alfred Waller, and F3 Letters to ("Governor") Allen Beach from Alfred Waller. The letters illustrate several different perspectives on this turn-of-the-century marriage crisis and provide insight into the emotional, social, legal, and financial aspects of the Waller's separation.

Alfred Waller’s letters to his wife are typically full of heartbreak, atonement, and pleas for reconciliation, as well as frequent discussions of his financial difficulties in providing an allowance to his estranged wife. Illustratively, Alfred Waller’s letters to his wife were addressed to the familiar "Nancy" prior to November 9, 1899, when he accepted her terms for separation; thereafter, he refers to her by the name "Annie."

Additional letters from the Waller's family and friends reflect the social difficulties of divorce at the turn-of-the-century. Many letters, including one from Annie Waller's mother, advise the couple to reconsider their separation in order to avoid publicity and harm to the reputations of all involved.

Letters written to Allen Beach, the couple's legal intermediary and a resident of Watertown and Sackets Harbor, New York, document the couple's path to separation. The separation appears to have begun following the "Piercefield scandals," in which Alfred Waller's jealousy toward his wife purportedly resulted in "personal violence" toward her. In addition to Annie Waller's complaints of personal violence, Alfred Waller submitted a letter to Beach on April 1, 1900, in which he claims to have committed an act of adultery with a woman in Philadelphia. However, in his personal correspondence with Beach, Alfred Waller maintains that he has had no adulterous relationships with women, and that he only wrote the letter suggesting the contrary in order to provide the necessary "evidence" for the divorce as per his wife's wishes and Beach's recommendations. In later letters to Beach, Alfred Waller condemns his letter admitting adultery and flatly denies its truth. Alfred Waller also scorns Beach for advising him to falsely admit to such acts.

From the fragmentary and often one-sided evidence presented in the collection it is difficult to discern the facts leading up to the Waller's separation and the eventual outcome of their estrangement. Nevertheless, this small collection offers the researcher a glimpse into the difficult process of separation and divorce at the turn of the twentieth century. These letters may be useful to researchers interested in women's history, social history, family studies, as well as the legal and financial aspects of divorce during this time.
Selected Search Terms

**Personal Names**

Waller, Alfred R.

Waller, Annie.

**Corporate Names**

International Paper Company.

**Topical Terms**

Divorce--America--19th century--Sources.

Divorce--America--20th century--Sources.

Marriage--America--19th century--Sources.

Marriage--America--20th century--Sources.

**Geographic Names**

Watertown (N.Y.)--History--19th century--Sources.

Watertown (N.Y.)--History--20th century--Sources.

Piercefield (N.Y.)--History--19th century--Sources.

Piercefield (N.Y.)--History--20th century--Sources.

Sackets Harbor (N.Y.)--History--19th century--Sources.

Sackets Harbor (N.Y.)--History--20th century--Sources.

**Form/Genre Terms**

Letters (correspondence)

**Occupation**

Businessmen.

Housewives (people)

**Personal Contributors**
Waller, Annie.

Fisher, Cleveland D.

Beach, Allen.

Waller, Tom T.
Detailed Description of the Collection

Letters to Annie ("Nancy") Waller, 1899–1902 [Box 1 F1]

22 items

Includes letters from Alfred Waller to his wife Annie; one letter from Cleveland D. Fisher, A. H. Rathbone & Co., New York, who was an acquaintance of both parties; and one letter from "Mother" advising Annie Waller not to pursue divorce. All letters discuss the separation of Alfred and Annie Waller. Two letters from Alfred Waller to Annie include her written responses on the reverse side.

Letters to Alfred Waller, 1899–1900 [Box 1 F2]

6 items

Includes letters pertaining to Alfred Waller's separation and pending divorce from Annie Waller. Correspondents include Counsel Allen Beach of Watertown and Sackets Harbor, New York, Alfred's brother Tom T. Waller, and his wife Annie Waller.

Letters to ("Governor") Allen Beach from Alfred Waller, 1899 August–1900 May [Box 1 F3]

22 items

Includes letters discussing the separation and pending divorce of Alfred and Annie Waller. Allen Beach was the Waller's friend and legal counsel in this matter. Several letters include a discussion of Alfred Waller's attempts to orchestrate suspicions of his infidelity while in Philadelphia in order to provide circumstantial evidence as grounds for his wife's divorce suit.