
Born Boston, January 8, 1841—just over twenty when the war began; graduated Harvard, 1860—prosperous New England family;
Failed to get an officer’s commission and so enlisted as a private in 4th Battalion, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia—tried to assure his family that he would be a safe garrison—dismanded in a few days; his delicate appearance and spare body may have hampered his search for a commission July 1862 a recruiting officer for 33rd Mass. but did not enlist enough men to get a commission; August 1862 commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the 2nd Mass. Inf. Severely wounded at Antietam; reviewed inventions for the navy for a time; August 1863—became adjutant of 56th Mass. Inf. Later served as an adjutant for several generals—assuring his family this was a safe position;; killed by a solid shot near Hatcher’s Run on March 31, 1865
New introduction by Acken offers a through and clear account of Mills background and military service—notes Mills strengths and weaknesses; Any collection of letters needs a through introduction, and Acken provides one
Often critical of generals before he even got to know them; said nothing about slavery but offered strong racial comments against black soldiers; was favorably disposed to McClellan but not as a presidential candidate; Antietam wounded not that severe but left him lame for the rest of his life; continuous discomfort from wounded leg; not close friends but felt some attachment to fellow soldiers, p. 13; great affection for his mother; wrote mainly to her;

Good headnotes to each chapter that deal with the military context

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