



The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**Thomas William Sweeny papers**

1865-1941 [bulk 1865-1866]

MssCol 2934

## Summary

**Creator:** Sweeny, Thomas William, 1820-1892

**Title:** Thomas William Sweeny papers

**Date:** 1865-1941 [bulk 1865-1866]

**Size:** .4 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** Gift, Sweeny, Mrs. William, 1953

**Abstract:** Thomas William Sweeny (1820-1892) was a soldier in the U.S. Army and a Fenian leader. He was born in County Cork, Ireland, but came to the U.S. in 1832, joined the U.S. Army in 1843 and fought in the Mexican War and U.S. Civil War. In 1866 he became active in the Irish liberation movement as Secretary of War in the Republic of Ireland declared by the clandestine Fenian Brotherhood. After an abortive attempt to invade Canada from the New York and Vermont borders, Sweeny and his troops were arrested. Sweeny was released without trial and returned to the U.S. Army. He retired in 1870 with the rank of brigadier general. Collection consists of materials concerning the Sweeny faction in the Fenian Brotherhood and Sweeny's role in the Fenian movement. Letters and papers, 1865-1866, of the members of the Sweeny faction pertain to transportation of troops and supplies to various invasion points along the U.S.-Canadian border, preparations for the initial assaults, and strategies to be followed by the invaders. Some letters and papers, 1892-1941, of William M. Sweeny concern his father's activities in the Fenian movement. Also, a few letters from John Mitchel, the Fenian leader and editor.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**Alternative Form Available:** Entire collection available on microfilm; New York Public Library

**Preferred citation:** Thomas William Sweeny papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

## Creator History

Thomas William Sweeny (1820-1892) was a soldier in the U.S. Army and a Fenian leader. He was born in County Cork, Ireland, but came to the U.S. in 1832, joined the U.S. Army in 1843 and fought in the

Mexican War and U.S. Civil War. In 1866 he became active in the Irish liberation movement as Secretary of War in the Republic of Ireland declared by the clandestine Fenian Brotherhood. After an abortive attempt to invade Canada from the New York and Vermont borders, Sweeny and his troops were arrested. Sweeny was released without trial and returned to the U.S. Army. He retired in 1870 with the rank of brigadier general.

## **Scope and Content Note**

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## **Key Terms**

### **Geographic Names**

Canada -- History -- Fenian Invasions, 1866-1870

### **Subjects**

Fenians

Irish -- North America

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Soldiers

### **Names**

Sweeny, Thomas William, 1820-1892

Mitchel, John, 1815-1875

Sweeny, William Montgomery, 1871-1945

Fenian Brotherhood