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Guide to the Nelson Appleton Miles Collection 1886



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Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Access	3
Citation	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope Note	4
Subject Headings	4
INVENTORY	5

Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.MILESNA
Title	Miles, Nelson Appleton. Collection
Date	1886
Size	0.25 linear feet (1 box)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Nelson Appleton Miles (1839–1925) was a career soldier in the United States Army, serving in the American Civil War, the Indian Wars, and the Spanish-American War. The collection contains correspondence sent and received by Miles, particularly upon his becoming Commanding General of the Army.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Miles, Nelson Appleton. Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

Nelson Appleton Miles was born on August 8, 1839, in Westminister, Massachusetts. He was born to Daniel Miles, a lumber businessman and farmer and Mary Miles. Miles was educated in Boston, and spent much of his free time reading military history and studying military principles and techniques. When the Civil War began, Miles left his job as a crockery store clerk to join the Union Army on September 9, 1861. Rising quickly through the ranks, Miles became the Major General of the volunteer soldiers in 1865, at the age of 26. It was during the Civil War that he also received the Medal of Honor, the US military's highest honor, for "distinguished gallantry." Shortly after the war, he was a commandant at Fort Monroe in Virginia where former Confederate President Jefferson Davis was being held.

In the years between the Civil War and the Indian Wars, Miles was appointed commander of the 5th U.S. Infantry Regiment. On June 30, 1868, He married Mary Hoyt Sherman (niece of the Union General William Tecumseh Sherman, famous for his "scorched earth" strategy of total war against the Confederacy). Sherman and Miles had three children together, Cecilia, Sherman,

and James. Sherman Miles would later go on to become a General in the U.S. Army and was the Chief of the Military Intelligence Division in 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

By the end of the Indian Wars, Miles had been promoted to major general in the Regular Army. Shortly before the Spanish-American War, Miles was promoted again to Commanding General of the United States Army, a position held earlier by his wife's uncle, William T. Sherman. At the time, this position was the senior-most officer in the Army. After Miles' retirement, the position was abolished in favor of the new Army Chiefs of Staff. Miles held this position through the Spanish-American War, leading forces in Cuba and leading the invasion of Puerto Rico. After the war, Miles was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General in 1900. Miles retired in 1903 when he reached the mandatory retirement age. However, when the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, Miles, then 77 years old, offered his service to President Wilson but was turned down. Miles died in 1925, at the age of 85, from a heart attack. He was the last surviving general officer from either side of the Civil War. Miles is buried in Arlington National Cemetery in one of the two mausoleums on the grounds.

Scope Note

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The Nelson Appleton Miles Collection contains mostly letters written to and from Miles. Correspondents include George S. Boutwell, Augustus A. Chetlain, Joseph H. Choate, William H. Jaques, John McElroy, Fritz John Porter, Stewart Van Vliet, Alexander Hermann (a famous magician), Thomas Eckert (president of Western Union) and Rufus Saxton. The letters are varied in that they contain typed, handwritten, official documents, and personal letters. The letters are organized chronologically and date from October 15, 1886 to February 9, 1921. A large portion of the letters are congratulations upon Miles' promotion to Commanding General of the United States Army in 1895.

The collection also contains six documents that are not correspondence. Two are handwritten requests for information about the balance of Miles' bank account. Jotted on the bottom of one of the requests is "bal \$6,740.58," presumably a response to his request. The last four items are individual signatures of Miles'. Two of the signatures are on plain pieces of paper. Of the last two, one is a ticket of admittance to a dinner in honor of H.E. Li, and Chung Tang, and the other is a signature on what seems to be a statement of appreciation to the people of the Pacific Coast for their support for the troops.

The collection was previously part of the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection.

Subject Headings

- Boutwell, George S. (George Sewall), 1818-1905
- Chetlain, Augustus L. (Augustus Louis), 1824-1914
- Choate, Joseph Hodges, 1832-1917

- Jaques, William H. (William Henry), 1848-1916
- Miles, Nelson Appleton, 1839-1925
- Saxton, Rufus, 1824-1908
- Porter, Fitz-John, 1822-1901
- Van Vliet, Stewart, 1815-1901
-
- United States. Army – History

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Correspondence, 1886-1895

- William Crowninshield Endicott to Nelson Miles, October 15, 1886
- Nelson Miles to John H. May, September 2, 1895
- unknown to Nelson Miles, September 21, 1895
- Fitz John Porter to Nelson Miles, September 25, 1895
- Galusha Pennypacker to Nelson Miles, September 30, 1895
- Alexander Hermann to Nelson Miles, October 1, 1895
- Thoman Eckert to Nelson Miles, October 1, 1895
- Rufus Saxton to Nelson Miles, October 2, 1895
- John Moore to Nelson Miles, October 2, 1895
- August L. Chetlain to Nelson Miles, October 5, 1895
- unknown to Nelson Miles, October 7, 1895
- Urban A. Woodbury to Nelson Miles, October 7, 1895
- W. H. Jacques to Nelson Miles, October 7, 1895
- William L. James to Nelson Miles, October 7, 1895
- John J. Coppinger to Nelson Miles, October 8, 1895

Box 1

Folder 2

Correspondence, 1891-1921

- Henry R. Minzer to Nelson Miles, contains attachment, February 20, 1897
- Nelson Miles to Secretary of War, Russell A. Alger, 1898
- Adolphus Greely to Nelson Miles, June 20, 1898
- Nelson Miles to unknown, July 18, 1898
- Geo S. Boutwell to Nelson Miles, Spetember 9, 1898
- Nelson Miles to Russell A. Alger, 1898
- Joseph Hodges Choate to Nelson Miles, October 25, 1898
- Assistant Adjutant Gen. to Headquarters of the Army, November 23, 1898
- Nelson Miles to Geo. Morrie, June 22, 1899
- Stuart Van Vliet to Nelson Miles, February 7, 1901
- Nelson Miles to Mr. Eulrikin, June 3, 1915
- Nelson Miles to unnamed Colonel, February 5, 1916
- Nelson Miles to John McElroy, February 9, 1921

Box 1

Folder 2

Documents and ephemera, 1896-1901

- Financial information request, 1901
- Financial information request, undated
- Signature on dinner ticket, August 29, 1896
- Signature on blank paper, undated
- Signature on blank paper, undated
- Signature on letter of appreciation, undated