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Guide to the Lincoln Collection, Charles Edward Wilcox Civil War Diary 1861-1863



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.WILCOXCE
Title	Lincoln Collection. Charles Edwards Wilcox. Civil War Diary
Date	1861-1863
Size	1.75 linear feet (2 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	This diary was kept by Charles Edwards Wilcox (1839-1931), and includes his experiences during the Civil War as a northern soldier from Diamond Lake in northern Illinois. It forms part of the William E. Barton Collection of Lincolniana.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Lincoln Collection. Charles Edwards Wilcox. Civil War Diary, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

Rev. William Eleazar Barton (1861-1930) The Rev. William Eleazar Barton (1861-1930) was one of the early twentieth century's most prominent writers and lecturers on the life of Abraham Lincoln. Born in Sublette, Illinois, in the same year Lincoln assumed the presidency, Barton grew up in an environment heavily influenced by reverence for Lincoln. After pursuing undergraduate studies at Berea College in Kentucky, Barton earned his divinity degree from the Oberlin Theological Seminary in 1890. He served parishes in Tennessee, Ohio, and Massachusetts before becoming the pastor of the First Congregational Church of Oak Park, Illinois, a position he held until his retirement in 1924. Four years later, Barton accepted an appointment as lecturer at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, where he also organized and served as pastor of the Collegeseide Congregational Church.

Barton's work as a writer produced a number of denominational manuals for church organization and a series of books presenting the wisdom and parables of a character he named

Safed the Sage. For the last ten years of his life, however, Barton was best known to the public as a prolific author and lecturer on Abraham Lincoln. His publications about Lincoln included *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* (1920), *The Paternity of Abraham Lincoln* (1920), *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1925), *The Great and Good Man* (1927), *The Women Lincoln Loved* (1927), and *The Lincoln of the Biographers* (1930).

In the course of compiling material for his writings and talks, Barton visited Lincoln sites in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois; interviewed surviving Lincoln relatives and acquaintances; and traveled as far as California and England to collect information and conduct genealogical research on the ancestry of the Lincoln family. While acquiring a large collection of books, periodicals, pamphlets, manuscripts, and ephemera related to Lincoln and the Civil War era, Barton also purchased privately or at auction historical materials amassed by other Lincoln collectors such as John E. Burton and Osborn H. Oldroyd.

Scope Note

This diary was kept by Charles Edwards Wilcox (1839-1931), a northern soldier from Diamond Lake in northern Illinois. A fragment of the diary extends from Friday, April 6, 1860 to Monday, May 28, 1860, which latter date, he notes, was his twenty-first birthday. This early portion of the diary records his daily life at Illinois State Normal College where he was a student. It provides interesting contrasts with the main portion of the daily diary which extends from Friday, September 20, 1861 until Sunday, August 30, 1863. The only break in the diary is from Wednesday, February 26, 1862 until Friday, July 18, 1862. The diary was kept as a running letter which Wilcox periodically sent to his family.

During the two years covered by the diary Wilcox served with the 33rd Illinois Infantry Regiment, he was promoted upward from corporal to sergeant major of his regiment. During the two years before September, 1863 Wilcox served throughout the length of the Mississippi Valley. In the diary Wilcox gives his impressions of the battle of Frederickstown, Missouri and a day by day account of the campaign against Vicksburg. He also served for a time on the gunboats on the Mississippi and describes their operation. For the most part, the diary is concerned with the everyday events in camp, his impressions of the new country, and family affairs. In the area of social history, Wilcox was, with his education, a close and articulate observer. Rarely, however, does he comment on the wider movements of the war which he apparently had little information about, and almost never does he speak of political developments.

Also with the diary are three letters from Wilcox during the same period to his sweetheart, Abbie R. Reynolds, whom he married in June, 1864 and several newspaper clippings which he enclosed in these letters.

The diary was given to the Lincoln Historical Collection by Wilcox's daughter, Mrs. Ethel F. Bonser in 1939. A letter of Mrs. Bonser giving a biographical sketch of her father is enclosed with the diary.

The collection is organized into two series. The first contains the entries of Charles E. Wilcox's diary as well as his letters written to Abbie R. Reynolds. The second series houses an oversized item which was enclosed in a letter to Reynolds and re-housed for preservation purposes.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/>

Subject Headings

- Wilcox, Charles Edward
- Barton, William Eleazar, 1861-1930
- Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865
- United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

INVENTORY

Series I: The Civil War Diary of Charles Edwards Wilcox

Box 1

Folder 1

Diary, April 1860 - September 1862

Box 1

Folder 2

Diary, October 1862 - March 1863

Box 1

Folder 3

Diary, April 1863 - August 1863

Box 1

Folder 4

Correspondence and clippings

- "Drilling," news clipping, undated
- "Drilling Par Excellence," news clipping, undated
- [Untitled], news clipping, Bloomington, August 23, 1861
- Envelope addressed to Miss Abbie R. Reynolds, Griggsville, Illinois, 1861
- Wilcox, Charles E., August 25, 1861, Bloomington, IL, [to Abbie R. Reynolds?], 7 pp.
- Wilcox, Charles E., October 29, 1861, Ironton, Mo., to Abbie R. Reynolds, 6 pp. with envelope
- Wilcox, Charles E., July 4, 1863, Vicksburg, to Abbie R. Reynolds, 2 pp.

Series II: Oversized Material

Box 2

Folder 1

Broadside, "The Normal Picket"