



Lyman G. Bennett Collection (R0274)

Collection Number: R0274

Collection Title: Lyman G. Bennett Collection

Dates: 1857-1865

Creator: Bennett, Lyman G., 1832-1904

Abstract: The Lyman G. Bennett Collection contains photocopies and original diaries and topographic maps of a civil engineer, member of the 36th Illinois Infantry, and civilian employee of the U. S. Army. The materials concern homesteading in Minnesota in 1857; campaigning in Missouri and Arkansas with the Army of Southwest Missouri, 1861-1862; mapping in Kansas and Colorado in 1865; and the Powder River Indian Expedition in Nebraska and Wyoming in 1865.

Collection Size: 0.5 cubic foot
(10 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at rolla@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Lyman G. Bennett Collection* (R0274); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Rolla].

Donor Information: The collection was loaned for photocopying to the University of Missouri by John C. Bennett on May 16, 1986 (Accession No. RA0343). An addition was donated on September 27, 1988 by Lyman L. Bennett (Accession No. RA0421). An addition was donated on November 7, 1988 by Lyman L. Bennett (Accession No. RA0424). An addition was donated on November 21, 1988 by Lyman L. Bennett (Accession No. RA0427).

Alternate Forms Available: Digital formats of folders 2, 3, and 7 are available on the [Community and Conflict: The Impact of the Civil War in the Ozarks](#) website.

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Lyman G. Bennett Collection can be found in the following collections:

Preston T. Sharp Collection (R1204)

Berthold Falkenhainer Papers (R1281)

Processed by: Processed by John F. Bradbury, February 1, 1989. Revised by Kathleen Seale, May 12, 2022.

Biographical Note:

Lyman Gibson Bennett was born in 1832 in Schuyler County, New York to Charles and Louisa *Canfield* Bennett. He was reared and educated there until 1849, when his family removed to Oswego in Kendall County, Illinois. Bennett taught school for five years, and then trained as a surveyor and civil engineer. He worked as a railroad surveyor and later served as the county surveyor of Kendall County. Bennett spent most of 1857 in Minnesota in an unrewarding attempt to homestead, first near Winona, then in the Faribault District near Ashland. He supported himself by selling maps through subscription and by employment as a member of the surveying team for the proposed Transit Railroad. He terminated his unsatisfactory experience in Minnesota by returning to Illinois late in 1857 to resume teaching school. He married Melissa Lyon in 1859 and together they had four children.

When the Civil War broke out, Bennett enlisted as a corporal in Company E of the 36th Illinois Infantry, a three-year unit known as the "Fox River Regiment." Military authorities took advantage of his skills, assigning him to engineering duties at Rolla and St. Louis.

His detached duty, which included map-making and work on fortifications, ended in time for Bennett to join his regiment at the Battle of Pea Ridge. He was detached after the battle to serve on the engineering staff of Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis. He sketched the battlefield and was the cartographer of the Army of the Southwest as it marched across Missouri to Helena, Arkansas. In 1863, Bennett took a commission as major of the 4th Arkansas Cavalry (U.S.), which he helped raise and organize. He resigned and was discharged in August 1864. As a civilian, Bennett again joined the engineering department of General Samuel R. Curtis, then commanding the Department of Kansas. He mapped the 1864 battlefields of Price's Missouri raid, and was sent to inspect the army's installations along the stage line to Denver. Later in 1865 Bennett served as engineering officer with the Powder River Indian Expedition. Bennett left the army's employ in 1866 to return to Illinois. He moved to Springfield, Missouri, in 1880, purchasing a farm on the western edge of the city. He continued to work as an engineer and surveyor, platting additions to the City of Springfield, and surveying railroad lines in Missouri and Oklahoma. He died at his home southeast of Springfield in February 1904. A week later, on March 2, his wife passed away. They are buried in Hazelwood Cemetery in Springfield, Missouri.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following two series:

Lyman Bennett Diaries
Diaries

Scope and Content Note:

Lyman Bennett Diaries

This series consists of diaries and a series of topographic maps. Original materials, photocopies and typescripts are included in the collection. All of the material is indexed. Chronologies and itineraries compiled from the diaries also are available in the collections administration folder alongside 35mm negative slide copies of photographs of Lyman Bennet in uniform and two family portraits. With the exception of the diary for 1857, which pertains to homesteading in Minnesota, all of the materials concern Bennett's Civil War service and subsequent employment by the army. The diaries for 1861-1862 cover Bennett's surveying at Fort Wyman in Rolla, Missouri, his assignment to army headquarters in St. Louis, sickness and hospitalization in that city, participation in the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, and the movements of the army following that battle. The diaries feature several pen and ink sketches including the regimental camp and Fort Wyman at Rolla, the camp at Springfield, the Battle of Wilson's Creek, and "Bob's Knob," an unusual topographic feature in McDonald County, Missouri.

Some of the information from the diaries for 1861-1862 was later incorporated into the *History of the 36th Regiment Illinois Volunteers* (1876), which Bennett co-authored with the regiment's chaplain, William M. Haigh.

The topographic maps are entitled "Route of the Army of the Southwest," 1862. They begin with the positions of the Union and Confederate armies at the Battle of Pea Ridge, March 6-8, 1862. Subsequent maps show the Union army's march southeast along the White River, ultimately to Helena, Arkansas, in July 1862. Many of the maps also feature notes on distances marched camps and towns. There are plats of the towns of Cassville, Cape Fair, Galena, Forsyth, and West Plains, Missouri, and Salem, Batesville, Sulphur Rock, Elizabeth, Moro, and Helena, Arkansas.

Bennett's late-war diary of service as a civilian employee consists of entries for January-April and July-October 1865. The first period includes Bennett's work as a surveyor for the Department of Kansas. The entries describe field work on the battlefields at the Big Blue River, the Marmiton River, and Westport, Missouri, and at Mine Creek, Kansas. Bennett's maps of these locations were later published in the *Official Military Atlas of the Civil War*, plate 66, numbers 3-4. Bennett was then ordered on an inspection trip to Fort Scott, Olathe, and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in which he examined and reported on fortifications in those areas. There followed a similar inspection of defenses along the stage line to Denver, Colorado, and at Fort Laramie, Wyoming. The first segment of the diary ends with entries on Bennett's visit to the gold mining camps west of Denver.

The last portion of the diary concerns the Powder River Indian Expedition, a three-pronged offensive against the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho in Wyoming and Montana. Bennett accompanied the eastern column, commanded by Colonel Nelson Cole of the 2nd Missouri Light Artillery. The column left Omaha in July 1865 bound for Wyoming and a rendezvous with similar columns from Salt Lake City and Fort Laramie. The expedition terminated in failure in September 1865, beset with severe logistical problems, the early onset of winter, and attacks by Native Americans. Cole's eastern column was particularly hard-pressed. It was near collapse

when it reached the supply depot at Fort Connor (later known as Fort Reno), Wyoming. The entries in Bennett's diary record the arduous march through Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming. There are vivid descriptions of incidents along the march, skirmishing with Native Americans, and the effects of exposure and starvation on the men and animals in the column. After the eastern column reached Fort Connor, Bennett was ordered to Fort Laramie to begin mapping the operations of the Powder River Expedition. The final entry in the diary is for October 4, 1865, in which Bennett noted meeting famed mountain man Jim Bridger at Fort Laramie. Bennett's diary may be compared with the reports of Colonel Nelson Cole and Captain Henry Palmer of the eastern column.

Diaries

This series includes another diary of the Powder River Indian Expedition. Its author is unknown and its provenance with the Bennett material is unexplained. The author accompanied the western column of the expedition, but he does not appear to have been a soldier. Perhaps, like Bennett, he was a civilian employee of the army. He usually traveled with the wagon train but was privileged enough to ride away from the main body on brief excursions. He was on familiar terms with many of the officers of the expedition.

The western column originated at Salt Lake City and reached the Powder River country via Fort Laramie. The column marched with the commander of the expedition, Brigadier General Patrick E. Connor, and its guide, Jim Bridger. The diary entries begin on July 29, when the command left Fort Laramie. Subsequent entries include descriptions of the march and the expedition's leaders, the construction of Fort Connor on the Powder River, the activities of the Army's Pawnee scouts and the Battle of Tongue River. The last diary entry, on September 14, 1865, describes attempts to establish communications with the missing eastern column. The volume concludes with an undated discussion of the trouble with Native Americans in the 1860s which suggests that agitation by rebel emissaries to the west had a considerable influence on the behavior of the tribes.

The collapse of the Powder River Indian expedition under logistical duress led to the removal of General Connor from his large command. His final report was destroyed in a hotel fire in Salt Lake City in 1865. Lyman Bennett's diary and the unidentified author's account are useful additions to the sources. The handiest compilation of Powder River materials is that by LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen, *Powder River Campaigns and Sawyers Expedition 1865* (Glendale, Calif., 1961). The anonymous account of General Connor's column can be used in tandem with the diary of Captain B. F. Rockafellow. Folder 10 contains a photocopy of a typescript of the diary prepared by Helen Davenport from the original diary donated by Lyman L. Bennett.

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Diaries

f. 9 Diary, July-September, 1865

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