



Aquilla Standifird Papers (R0458)

Collection Number: R0458

Collection Title: Aquilla Standifird Papers

Dates: 1862-1865

Creator: Standifird, Aquilla, 1838-1932

Abstract: The Aquilla Standifird Papers contain photocopies of the Civil War diary of a sergeant and, later, lieutenant of Company D, 23rd Iowa Infantry. The diary covers duty in Missouri, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, July 26, 1862 through circa April 15, 1865. Included are descriptions of service in the Army of Southeastern Missouri, the Vicksburg Campaign, including the battles of Port Gibson, Champion's Hill, Big Black River Bridge, and Milliken's Bend, and furlough and medical leave in Iowa.

Collection Size: 0.04 cubic foot
(1 folder)

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] *Aquilla Standifird Papers* (R0458); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Rolla].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Lynn Morrow on March 20, 1991 (Accession No. RA0504).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Aquilla Standifird Papers can be found in the following collections:

Civil War Documents (C2654)

Processed by: Processed by John Bradbury, February 12, 1992. Revised by Niki Cox, January 13, 2023.

Historical Note:

Aquilla Standifird was a twenty-three-year-old farmer at Drakeville in Wayne County, Iowa, when he “concluded to enlist.” He joined a company of volunteers organized at Corydon, Iowa, on 26 July 1862, and was elected first sergeant. The company was mustered into United States service as Company D of the 23rd Iowa Infantry on September 19, 1862. The regiment completed its organization at Des Moines, then moved to Keokuk for transportation to St. Louis, Missouri. The troops began their first active duty on October 8, 1862, at Ironton, Missouri, the railhead of the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad. The 23rd Iowa was then ordered to Patterson, where the Army of Southeastern Missouri was assembled. Under the command of Brigadier General John Wynn Davidson, the army began a winter campaign which lasted until the end of February 1863, and which is one of the most obscure operations of the Civil War in Missouri. After marching to the Missouri/Arkansas border and back to Iron County, the Army of Southeastern Missouri was broken up in March 1863 when the need for infantry became imperative for the Vicksburg Campaign. Most of the infantry at Ironton and Pilot Knob, including the 23rd Iowa, marched to Ste. Genevieve and embarked on the downriver trip toward Vicksburg. The Iowa troops landed at Milliken’s Bend, Louisiana, on the west side of the Mississippi River above Vicksburg, on March 28, 1863.

Standifird was promoted to 2nd lieutenant of Co. D in April 1863, just as the regiment began the sequence of marching and fighting which culminated in the surrender of Vicksburg in July. The 23rd Iowa first came under fire at the Battle of Port Gibson, Mississippi, on May 1, 1863, and took part in the battles of Champion’s Hill on May 16, and Big Black River Bridge on May 17, 1863. Standifird escaped injury although ten men in Co. D were wounded, and the regiment’s colonel, William Henry Kinsman (1832-1863), was killed at Big Black River Bridge. The Iowans took up positions in the siege lines surrounding Vicksburg on May 20, 1863, but were pulled out of line and sent to Milliken’s Bend on June 6, 1863. The regiment was heavily engaged in the battle there on June 7 and lost sixty-five killed and wounded. The dead included one man who was shot to death as he stood next to Standifird. The survivors were sent back to Vicksburg and were present when the city was surrendered on July 4, 1863.

Lieutenant Standifird contracted ague at Vicksburg and suffered from its effects for the remainder of his military service. He returned home to Drakeville on furlough in August. His leave was extended for medical reasons through December 1863, during which period he was hospitalized twice at Keokuk. Denied a medical disability at Keokuk, Standifird rejoined his regiment, then at Indianola, Texas, in February 1864. He resigned his commission due to jaundice and general debility on March 12, 1864, at Matagorda Island, Texas, and was discharged on March 27, 1864. He took a steamer for Keokuk and reached Drakeville on April 16, 1864. Four days later he wrote, “To day will end this diary... In this sketch I have tried to get the exact fact as it occurred. Possibly at some time it will be read by someone long after the writer has answered the last roll call.” A postscript to the diary notes that he was commissioned captain of the Wayne County company of Iowa Militia in August 1864. The company “kept watch for any act by those inclined to be disloyal,” and was disbanded in April 1865. Standifird noted that he did not receive any compensation for his time or the burden of responsibility in the militia.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged in the original order.

Scope and Content Note:

The army diary of Aquilla Standifird is one of thousands of such documents left by soldiers during the Civil War which provide the details of army life not found in official military reports. Standifird's diary is particularly useful for research on the Army of Southeastern Missouri and the Vicksburg Campaign. There are descriptions of camp life in Missouri, especially at Patterson and the encampments at West Plains, the Eleven Point River, the Current River, and in Iron County. There is also an account of the destruction of Dallas in Bollinger County. The entries on the Vicksburg Campaign include descriptions of the engagements at Port Gibson, Champion's Hill, and Big Black River Bridge, Mississippi, and at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana. Researchers working on the home front during the war may be interested in the accounts of Standifird's furlough to Drakeville and hospitalization at Keokuk.

Container List:

f. 1 Aquilla Standifird diary, 1862-1865

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