

University of Memphis

University of Memphis Digital Commons

Special Collections Finding Aids

Special Collections

8-28-2021

MSS0398. Major James E. Edmonds collection finding aid

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/speccoll-findingaids>

Recommended Citation

"MSS0398. Major James E. Edmonds collection finding aid" (2021). *Special Collections Finding Aids*. 96. <https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/speccoll-findingaids/96>

This Finding Aid is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections at University of Memphis Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Special Collections Finding Aids by an authorized administrator of University of Memphis Digital Commons. For more information, please contact khggerty@memphis.edu.

University of Memphis Libraries
Preservation and Special Collections Department

126 Ned R. McWherter Library
Memphis, TN 38152 - 3250
Phone: (901) 678 - 2210
E-mail: lib_sc@memphis.edu

Major James E. Edmonds collection

Title: Major James E. Edmonds collection
Collection No: MSS.398
Creator: Edmonds family
Extent: 0.25 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1856-1917

Abstract: The collection is composed of letters, documents, and photographs by and about Major James Ezekiel Edmonds (1837-1901), who served in the 94th Ohio Volunteers during the Civil War, and his family.

Provenance: Purchased from Charles Apfelbaum, Valley Stream, New York, October 1995.

Processed by: James E. Montague, October 1999; Gerald Chaudron, August 2014.

Access: Open to all researchers.

Language: English

Preferred Citation: Major James E. Edmonds collection, Department of Preservation and Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: August 2014

Biographical information

James Ezekiel Edmonds was born in Newtown, Fairfield County, Connecticut, on January 22, 1837, to James (d. 1875) and Eliza Pickwick Edmonds. The family left Connecticut for Piqua, Ohio, and James later attended Washington College in Washington, Pennsylvania, until 1860. After graduation, he moved to Natchez, Mississippi, to take a teaching position until the declaration of war forced him to move to Indiana at the end of 1861. He enlisted in Company C of the 94th Ohio Volunteers on July 23, 1862, and for the next three years fought in Tennessee and Georgia. He left the army as a brevet major on December 1866. Edmonds became a cotton farmer in Mississippi, and owned Buckridge Plantation, in Bolivar County near Rosedale. He married Anna Maria Nugent (1850-1923) in New Orleans, Louisiana, on December 15, 1875. They had one son, James E., Jr. James E., Sr., died of pneumonia in February 1901 and was buried in New Orleans.

James E. Edmonds, Sr., had a brother, John A. (b. circa 1840), who enlisted in James' company in August 1862. He was wounded at the Battle of Perryville on October 8, 1862, promoted to sergeant in January 1863 and mustered out in June 1865. Their sister Amelia married Elisha Mix (1818-1899) from Watertown, Connecticut, in 1843. The couple had two children, Rosina (b. 1846), who married Harold C. Weeks and had a daughter Alice M., and Elisha (b. 1850). The Mix family moved to a farm in Michigan in 1854 and there Elisha raised the 8th Michigan Cavalry in 1862 and rose to the rank of brigadier general during the war. Afterwards, Elisha returned to Michigan, then went to Connecticut in 1874 but finally retired to Allegan, Michigan.

J.E. Edmonds, Jr. was born on December 17, 1879, in New Orleans. He studied law at the University of Mississippi between 1896 and 1900 and played on both the baseball and football teams. After leaving Oxford in 1900, Edmonds briefly returned to the Mississippi Delta, but by 1902 he was working as a newspaper correspondent/artist in New Orleans. On May 29, 1902, he married Rosa Vertner Warfield (1879-1930) of Natchez, and they had a son, James E., III, on December 6, 1903. J.E. Edmonds, Jr., joined the Louisiana National Guard in 1902, served in the Nicaraguan army during the Estrada revolt in 1910, and was assistant adjutant general of the Louisiana National Guard in 1912. By this date he was living in Baton Rouge and had become associate editor of the *New Orleans Item* and president of the Baton Rouge State-Times Publishing Company. He became managing editor of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* in 1919 after three years in the army, and held that position until 1925. From 1927 to 1936 he was commander of the National Guard's 108th Cavalry Regiment, then commanding general of the National Guard's 23rd Cavalry Division (1939-1940), and finally commanding general of Camp Lee, Virginia between 1941 and 1943. Edmonds retired with the rank of major-general. He died on July 16, 1969.

Sources:

Record of the Ninety-Fourth Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, in the War of the Rebellion, Cincinnati: Ohio Valley Press, pp. 22, 117, 119. Available at

<https://archive.org/details/recordofninetyfo00unit>

Dugat-Greene, Anita, "Left For Texas: The Nugents: The Second Generation", August 16, 2013. Available at <http://leftfortexas.blogspot.com/#!/2009/10/armstrongs-and-nugents-through-mist-of.html>

Thomas, Henry F., *A Twentieth Century History of Allegan County, Michigan*, Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1907, pp. 83-87. Available at <http://books.google.com/books?id=tBgVAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA86&lpg=PA86&dq=Eliza+Pickwick+Edmonds&source=bl&ots=YpvqjGdc5u&sig=qyycDWPHC88ehpJ7kDo7N-Unqyg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ZmkHVJjLJKNyASTyYDoAw&ved=0CCQQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=Eliza%20Pickwick%20Edmonds&f=false>

Scope and contents

The collection is composed of letters, documents, and photographs by and about James E. Edmonds and his family. The correspondence by Edmonds before and during the Civil War is particularly valuable. In a letter written from Natchez, Mississippi, in 1860, he describes life in the city and discusses slavery from a northerner's perspective. In letters spanning 1862 to 1865, Edmonds gives accounts of the battles at Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, Chattanooga, and Murfreesboro. He also discusses his change of heart about the war, from initially supporting negotiation with the Confederates to later advocating their total defeat. A letter from his brother John describes his being wounded in the face at Perryville. There is also documentation of James Edmonds' army service in the ordnance and mustering documents.

Other items of interest include a lecture written by James Edmonds advocating a more self-sufficient economy for the United States, and an application to join the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States by his son. There are scattered materials related to James' father, son and his family, and one letter from his wife's father, John Pratt Nugent (1792-1872), to her brother Clarence Jewell Nugent (1843-1915), who became a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Mississippi and Kentucky.

A letter from someone who does not appear to be related to the Edmonds family is that written by Dilon Phelps, a new recruit in the 6th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry after arriving at Camp Curtin, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, who gives a brief description of camp life.

Related materials

James E. Edmonds papers, 1863-1864 and undated, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

James E. Edmonds Collection, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi.

Anne Marie Nugent Edmonds papers, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Rosa Warfield Edmonds Papers, Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi.

Subject terms

SUBJECTS:

Natchez (Miss.)

United States. Army. Ohio Infantry Regiment, 94th (1862-1865)

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Campaigns & battles--Tennessee.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Campaigns--Kentucky.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Military facilities—Union--Tennessee--
Chattanooga.

NAMES:

Edmonds, James.

Edmonds, James E., 1837-1901.

Edmonds, James E., 1879-1969.

Edmonds, John A.

Mix, Amelia.

Nugent, Clarence J., 1843-1915.

Nugent, John P., 1792-1872.

Phelps, Dilon.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder 1: Correspondence: James E. Edmonds to family, 1856-1860:

1. James E. Edmonds, Washington, Penn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1856
September 24. Attending Washington College.

2. James E. Edmonds, Washington, Penn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1858
April 24.

3. James E. Edmonds, Washington, Penn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1859
September 24.

Notes commencement, intends to study law.

4. James E. Edmonds, Washington, Penn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1860
March 5.

Discusses moving to the South to teach and continue his law studies. "So far as losing any of the attributes of manhood, I do not believe that necessarily follows from a residence south. I do not intend to meddle in politics, that is not my vocation, and no one ever will or ever can deprive me of the rights of a freeman. People who go south and attend to their own concerns and leave the peculiar institution alone will not be harmed in any right or privilege. This I here [?] from those who are there now. As far as slavery in itself is concerned in this country, it is the best possible condition for the negro here, If all could be taken to Liberia I would heartily agree, but as long as they must be here, you cannot better their condition by freeing them. The influence on the country would be terrible... I do not believe in the extension of slavery any more than you do, and I do believe in keeping it where it is, and this is the opinion of a majority of intelligent southerners themselves."

5. James E. Edmonds, Natchez, Miss., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1860

October 23.

Has been ill with fever and compares life in Natchez with that in the North. Notes letters take up to ten days to reach him and "...in fact it takes a little longer to do anything here than it does in the North. They are certainly the slowest and at the same time the highest priced people I ever saw. We have nothing less than half a dime. I have not seen a three cent piece or a copper since I came here."

6. James E. Edmonds, Natchez, Miss., to Edmonds family, Piqua, Ohio, 1860 December 28.

"I am growing more and more contented here and if political matters get straight again so as to have no bad effect upon money matters shall soon feel almost like a citizen of the south. As it is, I feel no sympathy whatever with those who appear so anxious to meddle with the institutions of the south. Opposed I am to disunion unless all efforts to settle the difficulty amicably fail, then I say dissolution of this glorious union is better than continued strife."

7. James E. Edmonds, Anderson, Ind., to Amelia Mix (sister), 1862 January 26.

Has been there a month and is teaching. Notes he moved because of the outbreak of war. "The city [Natchez] and county constitute the wealthiest portion of the state, & consequently there is more style more elegance & education than in other places and as a natural consequence everywhere except in South Carolina there was more Union feeling there than elsewhere... Until the state seceded Natchez was strongly Union & Secession was a bitter pill." Notes he joined the Home Guard to prevent any trouble and, for the same reason, the group of Northern teachers decided to complete the term and then resign from the institute. Travelled north by train without incident until Clarksville, Tenn., where passports were demanded and baggage inspected, and then travelled on through Kentucky without problems. Says he might have remained in Natchez but feared being forced into the army. Is considering joining the army but will wait until after the winter.

Folder 2: Correspondence: James E. Edmonds to family, 1862.

1. James E. Edmonds, camped 6 miles from Louisville, Ky., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1862 September 6. (2 copies)

Describes march to Louisville and skirmishes along the way. "...allow me to say we arrived here Friday noon after the hardest march of the war, being 125 miles in 5 1/2 days with little or nothing to eat or drink."

2. James E. Edmonds, Headquarters, 94th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Camp Buell, Paintsville, Ky., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1862 September 14.

Notes has been promoted to sergeant major and made adjutant. Comments on the quality of the officers of Company C.

3. James E. Edmonds, Headquarters, 94th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, camp near Harrodsburg, Ky., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1862 October 12.

Notes Battle of Perryville. "I lost my horse in the battle, a cowardly thieving soldier who said he would hold him while I went in run off with him. None of our officers rode their horses into the field, but we went in with our sleeves rolled up and when I came

back after the fight was over my horse, blankets, and all were gone and have not been heard of since."

4. James E. Edmonds, Headquarters, 94th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Camp Edgefield Junction, Tenn. (near Nashville), to brother and sister, 1862 November 19. "Yet while I have done only what I thought my duty, changed say from a compromise man to a radical I fear that the majority of the north is turning the other way and are now in favor of compromise upon any term...The Dem[ocrat]s & their supporters are in favor of compromise looking toward a separation permanently. The Almighty dollar still rules and I know many republicans who this fall voted the Dem ticket because it was an "anti tax to support the war" ticket. Principle is nothing to such men, only money. I am fast becoming a Federalist of the Alex Hamilton stripe & am almost convinced that man is incapable of self government..." Advocates stronger measures against the rebels.

5. James E. Edmonds, Headquarters, 94th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Camp Edgefield Junction, Tenn. (near Nashville), to unknown friend, 1862 November 28. "By date of letter you will see that we are still progressing southward. The soil of Tennessee now clings to the heels of the marching thousands of "Abraham's Angels" as we designate ourselves...Rough times we have seen, heavy marches, rainy days, cold nights, muddy roads, and still we live and are still willing to "fight for the Union..." Discusses action over past four months and commanding generals. "Those of us who are here however, are willing to do all we can to crush the rebellion, we have no patience with home traitors, with peace men, who would accept anything but an unconditional surrender, and recognition of the power of the U.S. The Army east & west needs encouragement, from friends at home, it needs defence against those who, while we are laying our lives upon the altar of our country, are striving to betray us that they may reap political benefits. You no doubt have read the indignant protests of the Indiana soldiers, against these efforts, a similar one will in a few days be sent to Ohio by Ohio troops and I hope it will be enough to confound Vallandigham and his kindred traitor crew." Continues criticism of those who support compromise and notes the cost of war but states while people at home may be demoralized, the soldiers are not.

[Additional pages appear to be part of this letter and describe camp conditions.]

Folder 3: Correspondence: James E. Edmonds to family and friend, 1863.

1. James E. Edmonds, Headquarters, 94th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Murfreesboro, Tenn., to Mary, 1863 January 20. Description of the Battle of Stone River. Notes the original regiment of 1000 men has been reduced to 200 strong. His youngest brother was captured and is now awaiting exchange in Nashville. "They are all "secesh" about here, all their sympathies are with the South, and the infernal butternut color is all that meets our eyes. The town is the most deserted & desolate looking place I ever saw, the truest landmark of the fruits of war."

2. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to Edmonds family, Piqua, Ohio, 1863 September 23. Briefly describes Battle of Chickamauga. "I came very near being taken while out skirmishing on Sunday morning. I never run so fast in my life... Perryville & Stone river were nothing compared with it."

3. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1863
October 10.

Describes Confederate shelling and credits General Thomas with enabling the Union forces to escape Chickamauga. Speculates on next move by the Confederate army but hopes it will be settled in Georgia. "The Rebels still front us their lines in the same close proximity to ours no picket firing is done, frequent interchanges of papers is had & the men take off their accoutrements and meet half way & chat & talk like old friends - frequent desertions take place from their army especially among the Ky & Tenn troops..."

4. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1863
November 15. [Incomplete]

Approves results of elections since they support the government. Discusses army pay and his prospects for promotion.

5. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1863
November 22.

Writes of the number of desertions from the Confederate army and preparations for expected attack.

6. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1863
December 3.

Further preparations for attack by Confederates. Promises full description of Battle of Missionary Ridge.

7. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1863
December [day illegible].

Detailed description of battle of Missionary Ridge.

8. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1863
December 10.

Notes work being done on fortifications and his regiment has assigned to work on "water works".

9. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1863
December 18.

Suggests that if the Army of the Potomac would do a little then the Confederates could be defeated.

10. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1863
December 25.

Describes his Christmas and again notes the number of Confederate deserters.

Folder 4.

Letter: James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to Washington College Class of 1860,
undated (circa August 1863).

Relates his experiences teaching in the South and being a soldier, and his views on the war.

Folder 5: Correspondence: James E. Edmonds to family, 1864-1865.

1. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1864 January 5.

Agrees with his father that what is needed is more men to fight.

2. James E. Edmonds, Chattanooga, Tenn., to James Edmonds (father), Piqua, Ohio, 1864 January 31.

Refers to construction around the camp. "This war with all its horrors is destined to do more for the upbuilding of the Government & this continent than all that has preceded it." Again notes rebel desertions and Union Army's optimism that the war will end soon.

3. James E. Edmonds, Graysville, Ga., to sister (Amelia), Piqua, Ohio, 1864 April 24.

Notes he thinks he is growing increasingly bitter towards the Confederates as a result of guerrilla activities. "We have Sherman at our head and the main armies in his command are in this region so that from us will be expected a great deal."

4. James E. Edmonds, camp near Chattahoochee River, Ga., to sister (Amelia), Piqua, Ohio, 1864 July 11.

Notes it is the 64th day of the campaign but the Confederates are not beaten and Atlanta has not fallen. Grazed by a shot that hit his horse. He captured a Confederate cavalryman and now has his horse.

5. James E. Edmonds, Goldsboro, N.C., to sister (Amelia), Piqua, Ohio, 1865 April 4.
[Incomplete]

Preparing for the "last grand campaign of the war as we think". Describes destruction of railroads. He gives particulars of fight at Bentonville and again mentions Sherman. Agrees that only the complete defeat of the Confederates will end the war. "Bayonets & rifles are the best peace measures after all. The rebels make a great blow over what they call defeating Sherman but if letting him go just where he wants to is defeat why give us more of them."

Folder 6.

Letters of introduction: George P. Rex, Surgeon, 33rd Illinois Regiment, Vicksburg, Miss., 1865 October 31, to:

1. Major General McArthur, Colonel Duff or Captain W.H. F. Randall. Says Major J.E. Edmonds, A.A.G. with General Force is visiting Alabama on private business.
2. Captain Portis. Says Edmonds is visiting Alabama to look over planting business.
3. Colonel Magee, 47th Illinois Regiment. Says Edmonds is visiting Selma on business.

Folder 7.

Diary? page, 186? February 19. James Edmonds notes meetings with old college classmates.

Folder 8.

Correspondence: James Edmonds (father), to James E. Edmonds, 1865-1872.

Folder 9.

Discharge by reason of promotion: Sergeant Major James E. Edmonds, 94th Regiment, Ohio Foot Volunteers, Murfreesboro, Tenn., 1863 March 3.

Folder 10.

1. Lecture: James E. Edmonds states that while the United States is unrivalled in many ways, apart from the blot of slavery handed down from pre-independence era, it is importing goods which could be produced at home. Advocates becoming more self-sufficient. Undated (pre-Civil War).

2. Essay: "Chivalry "by James E. Edmonds, 1859 January 29.

Folder 11.

Ordnance records: 94th Ohio Infantry Regiment, signed by James E. Edmonds, 1862-1864.

Folder 12.

Muster-in and muster-out records: 94th Ohio Infantry Regiment for James E. Edmonds, 1863.

Folder 13.

1. Photocopies of National Archives records of James E. Edmonds' military service, including applications for leave, company muster rolls and returns, 1863-1867.

2. Photocopies of National Archives records of Ernest Barthold, Company A, 96th Regiment, Illinois Infantry, 1862-1865.

Folder 14.

Letter: John A. Edmonds, Perryville, Ky., to mother and sister, Piqua, Ohio, 1862 October 14.

Describes being wounded in the jaw during Battle of Perryville where 2,500 to 3,000 Union soldiers were killed or wounded.

Folder 15.

Widow pension certificate: Anne M. Edmonds, 1902 February 3.

Folder 16.

1. Letter: Godfrey Frank and Company, Cotton factors, Memphis, Tenn., to J.E. Edmonds, Jr., Bolivar, Miss., 1901 January 21.

Reply to request for statement of Major Edmonds' account following his death.

2. Letter: Wright, Oliver and Company, Cotton Factors, Memphis, Tenn., to J.E. Edmonds, Jr., Erwin, Miss., undated [fragment]

Agrees to advance money on cotton crop.

Folder 17.

Letter: Albert G. Gill, Phi Kappa Psi fraternity, Washington, Pa., to J.E. Edmonds, Jr., Erwin

Station, Miss, 1901? May 22.
Expresses sympathy upon the death of father.

Folder 18: 2 items

Letters: To J.E. Edmonds, Jr. from cousins: Rosina Weeks, Allegan, Michigan, 1917 October 18; Alice Weeks, undated.

Folder 19.

Letter: Rosa Edmonds (wife), New Orleans, La., to J.E. Edmonds, Jr., undated.

Folder 20: 1 item

Letter: Amelia Mix (aunt), Allegan, Michigan, to J.E. Edmonds, Jr., 1896 January 22.

Folder 21.

Application for membership of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States by J.E. Edmonds, Jr. on the death of his father, 1912 October 30.

Folder 22.

Photographs:

1. "Cousin Cora and Cousin Sadie" with the Edmonds in Michigan, 1885. Stereoscopic view of two women standing beside a rustic table near houses in woodland.
2. Unidentified bearded man on a horse in front of a cotton ginning building? with ten African-American men standing on a platform, undated.

Folder 23.

Letter: John Pratt Nugent, New Orleans, La., to Clarence Jewell Nugent, 1867 June 14.

Folder 24.

Fragment of letter by A.P. Bancroft?, undated.

Folder 25.

Letter: Dilon Phelps, 6th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry, Camp Curtin, Harrisburg, Pa., to sister, 1861 May 21.

Notes he will be musician playing the fife. Discusses camp life and the accidental shooting of a soldier