Joseph Miles papers finding aid

Title: Joseph Miles papers
Collection No: MSS.0319
Extent: 0.25 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1864-1914

Abstract: The Joseph Miles papers contains a pocket diary covering an approximately three-month period in 1864, detailing the daily life of a United States Civil War soldier. It also contains two letters written to his father while he was away, a notebook from 1906-1907, a report card for his younger sister, a list of members of the Miles family, and a few letters written in 1914.

Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: Joseph Miles papers, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis

Publication date: 2023 May
Biographical Information

Joseph Miles was born on 1845 March 31, in Quincy, Adams County, Illinois, to Adrian Miles, 1809-1876, and Eliza Frost, 1812-1873. His parents were married in Athens, Ohio, on 1830 February 21. Joseph was their eighth child of twelve. During the United States Civil War, he served in the 53rd Indiana Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 4th Division, 17th Corps.

Miles married Lucy Webb Johnson (born in Missouri in 1845 November 14, died 1925) on 1868 March 31, in Cass County, Missouri. They were the parents of at least three sons and three daughters. He had various professions after his military service such as working in a mill and bookkeeping. He is recorded as living in Dolan Township, Cass County, Missouri in 1880, Coffeyville City, Montgomery County, Kansas, in 1900 and in 1910; and near Trenton, North Dakota in 1914. He died in Williston, North Dakota, on June 22, 1914.

Scope and contents

Joseph Miles' pocket diary very briefly describes a boat trip down the Mississippi to Natchez in September 1863 (pages i-iii); the bulk of the 118 pages documents his eventual return, after his home furlough, to his regiment near Atlanta in 1864 September-November. In this near-daily record, Miles records events and details as he made his way from the Midwest through Nashville, Chattanooga, and north Georgia, commenting on the scenery, living conditions, and service with provisional railway guard and fortification detachments.

Two letters of early 1864 November beseech his father to return to the Christian fold. An 1869 grade report for Joseph's younger sister, and a list of birth and death-dates for Joseph's parents and siblings complete the nineteenth century portion of the Miles papers. A 1906-1907 notebook contains family and other names and addresses, and some financial data on an unspecified business firm. A 1912 letter, and two of early 1914, provide glimpses into the lives of a farm family on the Great Plains, particularly North Dakota.

Subject terms

Civil War era
United States. Army.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Correspondents

Inventory

Box 1
Folder 1  Transcription: Joseph Miles’ pocket diary transcribed by descendant Paul F. Swan, 1990 July, edited by Ed Frank, 1990 October.
1. Pocket diary: Joseph Miles, 1864 September – 1864 November, 122 pages including cover.
2. Letter: from Joseph Miles, Camp 3rd Battalion Detts., Adairsville, Georgia, to his father, Adrian Miles, 1864 November 1 and 2, 20 pages.
4. Miles family list, undated (circa 1877).

2. Envelopes for letters: (in pieces inside larger envelope) 1912-1914 (4).
3. Letters: 1. to Anna, Roy, & all, from Pa & Ma, Riverside Farm, near Trenton, North Dakota, 1914 March 1, 2 pages.
   2. to Anna, Roy, & all, from Pa (Joseph Miles) & Ma, Riverside Farm, near Trenton, North Dakota, 1914 March 27, 3 pages.
   3. to Roy, from Anna, “At Home” 1912 December 5, 16 pages.