

Donald Benham Civil War Collection

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
Library of Congress

Prepared by Michael McElderry



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2010

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

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Collection Summary

Title: Donald Benham Civil War Collection

Span Dates: 1806-1916

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1850-1870)

ID No.: MSS85495

Creator: Benham, Donald, collector

Extent: 300 items; 1 container; .4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Collector. Correspondence, financial and legal records, military orders and records, speeches, and miscellaneous items comprising the Civil War collection of Donald Benham.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Averell, William Woods, 1832-1900.

Benham, Donald, collector.

Greeley, Horace, 1811-1872--Correspondence.

Lee, Robert E. (Robert Edward), 1807-1870.

Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865.

Organizations

United States. Army--Military life.

United States. Army--Recruiting, enlistment, etc.

United States. Army--Supplies and stores.

United States. Navy. Potomac Flotilla.

Subjects

Bull Run, 1st Battle of, Va., 1861.

Slavery--United States.

Strategy--History--19th century.

Places

Chesapeake Bay (Md. and Va.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Confederate States of America--Social conditions.

Maryland--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Petersburg (Va.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Potomac River--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Richmond (Va.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

United States--Foreign relations--1861-1865.

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

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Secret service.

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

United States--Politics and government--1861-1865.

Virginia--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Washington (D.C.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Occupations

Collectors.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The Civil War collection of Donald Benham, collector, was purchased by the Library of Congress in 2009.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of the Donald Benham Civil War Collection is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The Donald Benham Civil War Collection is open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Donald Benham Civil War Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The Donald Benham Civil War Collection spans the years 1806-1916, with the bulk of the items dating from 1850 to 1870. The collection contains correspondence, financial and legal records, military orders and records, speeches, and miscellaneous items, many containing personal accounts and commentary by officers and soldiers of living conditions during the Civil War from various stations and campgrounds. Battlefield letters home reveal details of camp life, enlistment payments and quotas, battle engagements, military strategies, slavery issues, and social conditions in the South during its occupation by Union forces.

Items in the collection inform on diplomatic policy and military strategy and include recruitment and mustering orders, supply and distribution records, and records of the Potomac Flotilla, a unit of the United States Navy created to protect communications in the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River and its tributaries from Confederate disruption. The collection includes letters from New York publisher Horace Greeley concerning Abraham Lincoln, the prosecution of the war, and political battles in Washington, D.C. A letter home written from Tennessee by a Union officer, August 24, 1862, confesses the evolution of his views on slavery stating, "I am getting to be more and more of an abolitionist." Another letter written from Burke's Station, Virginia, April 13, 1865, provides an eyewitness account of Robert E. Lee's evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia, and his subsequent retreat westward. In addition, the collection contains a typescript of a speech by William Woods Averell, Union cavalry general, concerning selected subjects relating to his life and military career, including retrospective accounts of wartime espionage and efforts to uncover spy networks in Washington, D.C., following the First Battle of Bull Run.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by topic and type of material.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	Cartwright, Thomas, 1863, 1873, 1894
BOX 1	Dunn, R. R., 1864-1865
BOX 1	Edwards, Ninian W., 1850-1854
BOX 1	Greeley, Horace, 1857-1863
BOX 1	Miscellaneous, 1836, 1846-1883, 1890-1892, 1909 (2 folders)
BOX 1	Swander, Bishop and Co., 1865
BOX 1	Financial and legal records, 1806, 1847, 1861-1867, 1877, 1887
BOX 1	Military orders and records, 1861-1870, 1916 (2 folders)
BOX 1	Miscellany, undated
BOX 1	Potomac Flotilla, 1864-1865
BOX 1	Speeches, circa 1863-1866, circa 1890