

Harville, John, Diaries

John Harville Diaries
1861-1864, 1913, 2010



Title Statement

Harville, John, Diaries John Harville Diaries, 1861-1864, 1913, 2010 (bulk dates 1861-1864) Ms.2010.053

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2010.053

Unit Date

1861-1864, 1913, 2010

Unit Date

(bulk dates 1861-1864)

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

The collection contains eight handwritten diaries chronicling John Harville's experiences during the American Civil War. From August of 1861 to January of 1864 Harville served with the 7th Wisconsin Regiment, Company F. He then transferred to the Veteran Reserve Corps for the remainder of his term, ending in July 1864. His diaries include details and stories from camp life, largely around Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Maryland. Suffering from chronic "congestion of the lungs," Harville spent Autumn 1862 to Spring 1864 in hospitals. He continued to document this period with stories of daily life, chores, staff and volunteers at the hospitals, and war news.

Creator

Harville, John McBride, 1839-1913

Extent

0.4 Cubic Feet 2 boxes

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open to research.

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Source of Acquisition

The John Harville Diaries were donated to Special Collections and University Archives by the family of Edward Ferguson in June 2010.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the John Harville Diaries commenced and was completed in August 2010. Some transcripts were provided by the donors. Additional transcripts were completed by Kira Dietz, Josh Howard, John Jackson, Jennifer Mitchell, and Melissa Smith, Special Collections and University Archive Staff, in June-August 2010.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], John Harville Diaries, Ms2010-053, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

John McBride Harville (also spelled Harvill) was born in Illinois on January 29, 1839. His family seems to have moved to Beetown, Wisconsin, around 1843, though other records indicate this may have occurred later. Before the early death of his mother when he was five, his parents appeared to have had three other children: Caroline (later Young), who Harville refers to as "Carrie" or "Cary" in his diaries; William; and Elizabeth (later Nickerson), who Harville calls "Lib." For several years, he lived with a foster family (the Sargents). His father, William, remarried and had five more children. By the start of the American Civil War, Harville was living with the Batie family in Tafton, Wisconsin.

Although Tafton did not have enough men to raise its own company, volunteers from the area, including Harville, joined others to form Company F, 7th Regiment Wisconsin Infantry in Lancaster during the summer of 1861. Harville served primarily in and around Washington, DC, Virginia, and Maryland. Chronic health problems resulted in his spending most of September 1862-August 1864 in hospitals in Baltimore, Maryland, though he continues to report on his personal experiences, as well as war news. In January of 1864, he transferred to the Veteran Reserve Corps until he mustered out in August 1864.

In October 1864, he married Harriet E. Trine (1846-1916), who he had known since before the war. As early as his first diary in 1861, he records having received letters from Hattie and Lizzie (presumably her sister) Trine. They settled in Wyalusing and had five children: William A. (1865-1894), Annie Laure (b. 1867), Frank D. (1869-1883), Edgar R. (b. 1872), and John M., Jr. (b. 1879). Following the war, Harville was both a farmer and a newspaperman. He died from pneumonia in Wisconsin at age 74 in June 1913.

The 7th Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteers, along with the 2nd Wisconsin, 6th Wisconsin, and 19th Indiana, formed the "Iron Brigade" in the autumn of 1861. In October 1862, the 24th Michigan joined the brigade. The Iron Brigade was under the immediate command of Brig. Gen. Rufus King and made up a part of the 3rd Brigade of the Army of Potomac, under Major General McDowell. Near the front of the battle at Gettysburg, Antietam, The Wilderness, Second Bull Run, and several other major campaigns, over the course of the war, the Iron Brigade suffered the greatest losses in proportion to its numbers.

Additional biographical information is available in the collection. More information on Wisconsin Regiments

can be found on the Wisconsin Historical Society website: <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/research.asp>.

Scope and Content

The collection contains eight original diaries, as well as transcripts and additional biographical information. Harville's diaries chronicle his experiences with the 7th Wisconsin Regiment during 1861 and 1862. He spent much of 1863 and 1864 in Newton University Hospital, and later Jarvis Hospital, in Baltimore, Maryland, facing chronic illness.

Clearly intended for an audience, the diaries contain short addresses to the "Reader" at the beginning and end, often including an apology for his poor grammar and spelling. Largely self-educated, Harville's diaries are surprisingly legible and his phonetic spellings are easy to decipher. Most of the diaries also include a list of letters received and written, as well as Harville's cash and barter accounts with friends. Several diaries are indexed and/or paginated.

Harville's early entries detail the formation of Company F in Lancaster, Wisconsin, travel to Washington, DC, and life in camp outside Alexandria, Virginia. Like many farmers in the war, he keeps consistent notes on the weather. He recounts stories of his own adventures which more than once landed him in trouble, as well as the exploits of others. He also writes of picket and guard house duty, the occasional scouting mission, frequent drills and dress parades, and war news. He remains relatively well-informed about the war, at least in as much as it related to his experiences and his regiment.

While spending time in Jarvis and Newton University Hospitals, the content of his entries begins to change some. He continues to record war news of note during this period, but the emphasis is on the work he does and the social life he develops. His illness is intermittent and so he also does chores around the hospital, including cleaning inside and outside the buildings, cooking and serving, and running errands. Harville spends a good deal of time helping the local women who volunteer at the hospitals, too, which he appears to thoroughly enjoy. At least two diaries contain a list of women and young ladies with whom he is acquainted.

Related Materials

John Harville is mentioned briefly in: Ray, William R., Lance J. Herdeggen, and Sherry Murphy. *Four Years with the Iron Brigade: The Civil War Journals of William R. Ray, Co. F, Seventh Wisconsin Infantry*. [Cambridge, Mass.]: Da Capo Press, 2002. Newman 2nd Floor, E 537.5 7th R39 2002.

VT Special Collections and University Archives houses several publications on the Iron Brigade. A list of these publications, with links to catalog records, is available [here](#).

Newman Library houses additional publications on the Iron Brigade, available for circulation. A list of these publications, with links to catalog records, is available [here](#).

Keywords

Civil War

Folk, historical, and patent medicine

Medicine

Medicine, Military -- History

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

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

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Regimental Histories -- Wisconsin

Existence and Location of Copies

The diaries, with complete transcripts, are available online.

Rights Statement for Archival Description

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Arrangement

The collection is arranged in two series: Series I: Diaries, 1861-1864 and Series II: Transcripts and

Biographical Information, 1913, 2010, undated.

Series I: Diaries, contains all eight original diaries, arranged in chronological order. There is some slight overlap of dates in diaries #7 and #8—both diaries contain different entries from the Summer of 1864.

Series II: Transcripts and Biographical Information, includes transcripts of the diaries and copies of biographical material (obituaries, family records, and two newspaper columns). Transcripts are arranged in chronological order, followed by the biographical material. Wherever possible, first names and/or corrected spellings have been added to names Harville mentions throughout his diaries, due in large part to the *Roster of Wisconsin Volunteers, War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* available online.

Description of Subordinate Components

Series I: Diaries

Unit Date 1861-1864

Diary #1

Unit Date August 1861 - January 1862

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Diary #2

Unit Date January - March 1862

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Diary #3

Unit Date March - May 1862

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Diary #4

Unit Date May - August 1862

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Diary #5

Unit Date August 1862 - May 1863

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Diary #6

Unit Date June - November 1863

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Diary #7

Unit Date December 1863 - August 1864

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Diary #8

Unit Date July - August 1864

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Series II: Transcripts and Biographical Information

Unit Date 1913, 2010, n.d.

Transcript, Diary #1

Unit Date August 1861 - January 1862

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Scope and Content

[Transcript \(pdf\)](#)

Transcript, Diary #2

Unit Date January - March 1862

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Scope and Content

[Transcript \(pdf\)](#)

Transcript, Diary #3

Unit Date March - May 1862

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Scope and Content

[Transcript \(pdf\)](#)

Transcript, Diary #4

Unit Date May - August 1862

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Scope and Content

[Transcript \(pdf\)](#)

Transcript, Diary #5

Unit Date August 1862 - May 1863

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Scope and Content

[Transcript \(pdf\)](#)

Transcript, Diary #6

Unit Date June - November 1863

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Scope and Content

[Transcript \(pdf\)](#)

Transcript, Diary #7

Unit Date December 1863 - August 1864

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Scope and Content

[Transcript \(pdf\)](#)

Transcript, Diary #8

Unit Date July - August 1864

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Scope and Content

[Transcript \(pdf\)](#)

Biographical Information

Unit Date 1913, n.d.

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 9 (folder)