

Peck, Benjamin M. Diaries

Benjamin M. Peck Diaries,
1864-1865



Title Statement

Peck, Benjamin M. Diaries Benjamin M. Peck Diaries, 1864-1865 Ms.2015.003

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2015.003

Unit Date

1864-1865

Language

English .

Abstract

The collection includes two Civil War diaries of Captain Benjamin M. Peck of the 141st Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry and later, the 1st U. S. Sharp Shooters. The diaries span 1864 and 1865, and document Peck's experiences traveling from Pennsylvania, his service (which took him to major battles in Virginia), and his eventual return home to Towanda, PA.

Creator

Peck, Benjamin M., 1838-1899

Extent

0.2 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Benjamin M. Peck Diaries must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Acquisition Information

The Benjamin M. Peck Diaries were purchased by Special Collections in 2014.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Benjamin M. Peck Diaries was completed in April 2015.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Benjamin M. Peck Diaries, Ms2015-003, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Benjamin M. Peck was born on October 5, 1838, in Smithfield, Bradford County, Pennsylvania. In 1862 he enlisted in the Union Army into Company "B" of the 141st Pennsylvania Volunteers Infantry Regiment as a 1st Sergeant. On December 10, 1862, he was promoted to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant, and then promoted to Full Captain on December 5, 1863. During the Battle of Chancellorsville, Lieutenant Peck was wounded in the neck and shoulder by a cannon shot on May 3, 1863. He returned to his unit after a two month absence fully recovered from his injuries and was mustered out of the service on May 28, 1865 in Washington, D.C.

Benjamin married Sarah H. Watkins on April 9, 1863, and after the war the couple had two children. Their son, Guy W. Peck, was born in 1867, followed by a daughter, Mary A. Peck in 1870. Benjamin entered the legal profession and received his license to practice law before entering the Army. After the war he returned home to Towanda, PA, and opened his law office. In 1872, he was elected prothonotary of the local court and served six years. In 1890, he was elect President Judge of the 13th Judicial District of Pennsylvania. Benjamin died on September 9, 1899 and is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in Towanda.

Scope and Content

The 1864 leather bound, preprinted diary contains two daily entries per page with cash accounts and notes sections in the back of the diary. In 1864, Benjamin M. Peck was the Captain of Company B in the 141st Regiment PA Volunteers. Due to absences, injuries, and illness of other officers he was placed in command of the regiment before being assigned to lead the 1st United States Sharp Shooters. Brigadier General Byron R. Pierce saw fit to place him in charge of the three companies of sharpshooters and he remained in this position until the end of the war. Peck describes battles, skirmishes, picket lines, commands, and other military assignments and engagements in great detail. He notes the various marches and travel routes of his company and records his travels between the Virginia front and his home in Towanda, PA. As part of the Army of the Potomac, Peck recounts the regiments campaign in Virginia and the Siege of Petersburg. He lists his men who were wounded or killed in battle, describes court martial proceedings, and even gives an account of the execution of a Union soldier for desertion. Following the 1864 presidential election he enumerates each candidate's results within the division, which Lincoln won convincingly.

The 1865 leather bound, preprinted, pocket diary contains one entry per day with cash accounts and notes listed in the back of the book. This diary continues with the 141st PA Volunteers camped outside of Petersburg in their winter quarters and continues through the end of the war and Peck's return home. He recounts the fall of Petersburg, the Union pursuit of Lee's Army of Virginia across the state, and Lee's ultimate surrender at Appomattox Court House. Peck was assigned to preside over several court martial proceedings and gives details regarding these proceedings and punishments, which include a botched execution of a Union soldier. As in the first diary, Peck provides an account of the daily movement of Union troops and supplies. He also gives detailed lists of captured soldiers and artillery, as well as Union wounded and casualty records. As the war nears its conclusion Peck was in charge of mustering out soldiers and kept thorough records of the process. He also recounts receiving the news of Presidents Lincoln's assassination and describes the mood of the men upon hearing the President was killed. The entries end in July of 1865 with Peck practicing law in his home town of Towanda, PA.

A transcript of the diary is available as part of the collection.

Related Materials

Quotes from Peck's diaries were used in *History of the 141st Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1862-1865*

by David Craft, Chaplain. Call No. E527.5 141ST C7 1885 Civil War.

Keywords

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

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

Civil War

Diaries

Alternate Form Available

The diaries have been digitized and are available online with transcripts.

Arrangement

The collection is in chronological order.

Description of Subordinate Components

Diary

Unit Date 1864

folder 1

Diary

Unit Date 1865

folder 1