

# Woods, John Henning Papers

John Henning Woods Papers

1856-1873



## Title Statement

Woods, John Henning Papers | John Henning Woods Papers, 1856-1873 Ms.2017.030

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## Publication Statement

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## Profile Description

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## Revision Description

**2025-03-19** Ella Winterling updated Existence and Location of Copies.

## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

Ms.2017.030

### Unit Date

1856-1873

### Language

English .

### Abstract

This collection includes three memoir volumes and three diaries written by John Henning Woods, a Southern Unionist, Confederate conscript, and eventual Union soldier during the American Civil War. While the collection spans the period of years from 1856 through 1873, the majority of the collection focuses on the years during the Civil War.

### Creator

Woods, John Henning, 1834-1901

### Extent

0.2 Cubic Feet 1 box

## Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

# Administrative Information

## Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

## Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the John Henning Woods Papers must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

## Acquisition Information

The John Henning Woods Papers were bought by Special Collections in September 2009 with funds from Special Collections, the Center for Civil War Studies, and the University Libraries.

## Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the John Henning Woods Papers was completed in September 2017.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: John Henning Woods Papers, Ms2017-030, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

# Biographical Note

John Henning Woods, a Southern Unionist, Confederate conscript, and Civil War memoirist, was born in Tennessee on July 4, 1834. After spending his childhood in Missouri, Woods married Mary Emma Caldwell, the daughter of a wealthy slaveholder and planter from Alabama in 1860. In 1861, Woods moved to Lebanon, Tennessee, to pursue his law degree at Cumberland University. Despite his ties to the South, Woods hated slavery and strongly supported the Union. Following the war's beginning and interruption of his education, he returned home to farm and teach.

Due to his support for the Union, Woods chose to remain at home throughout the beginning of the war until his conscription into the Confederate army in October of 1862. While at first Woods fought to remain at home, the threat of imprisonment eventually sparked him to report to the army, where he was drafted into the 36th Alabama Infantry Regiment, Company K. As a part of this regiment, Woods was trained at Talladega and then posted around Mobile, Alabama.

While at Mobile, Woods and a few fellow Unionist conscripts formed a secret Unionist organization called the Home Circle and planned a mutiny. Unfortunately, Woods was discovered prior to their planned mutiny and imprisoned to be tried. While awaiting his court martial, Woods was transported behind the army, following them through the Tullahoma Campaign and was then sent to Atlanta. His trial resulted in a sentence of death by firing squad; however, his execution was delayed due to the interference of a sympathetic general who had been his professor before the war. Woods saw the Battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga while imprisoned by the Confederate Army until he was once again sent to Atlanta following a stay of execution, furnished at the last minute from Jefferson Davis. He was then sent to work building trenches around Atlanta until he finally escaped Confederate officials on August 11, 1864, and made his way into Union lines.

Following his escape, Woods made his way to Buffalo, New York, where he enlisted in the 93rd New York Infantry Regiment. He served out the rest of the war as a clerk for the Union Army until his discharge on May 11, 1865. Following the war, Woods returned home and continued to teach, moving to Lawrence County, Missouri sometime before 1885. In 1885, his wife Mary died and in 1889, he married Mae Laverall of Pennsylvania. Woods died on March 5, 1901, and is buried alongside both of his wives and his daughter in the Woodland Cemetery near Springfield, Missouri.

# Scope and Content

This collection includes three memoir volumes and three diaries written by John Henning Woods, a Southern Unionist, Confederate conscript, and eventual Union soldier during the American Civil War. While the collection spans the period of years from 1856 through 1873, the majority of the collection focuses on the years during the Civil War.

The three volumes of Woods' memoir make up the largest portion of the collection. These three books focus on the years 1861-1864, describing his experiences of sectionalism, his opposition to secession and conscription, the process of forming an underground Unionist society in a Confederate regiment, his arrest

for inciting a mutiny, and the resulting imprisonment and trial.

The three journals cover a much broader range of topics and years, including genealogy, religion, marriage, slavery, and Woods' childhood. These three journals serve to contextualize the journals, as Woods referenced them during the writing process. Besides this, these journals also contain highly detailed drawings done by Woods during his imprisonment and a number of short entries in Pitman shorthand.

## Keywords

Civil War

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

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

Diaries

Autobiographies

Woods, John Henning, 1834-1901

## Alternate Form Available

Some of this collection has been digitized and is available online.

## Description of Subordinate Components

### **Memoir Volume 1**

**Unit Date** c. 1865

**box** 1

### **Memoir Volume 2**

**Unit Date** c. 1865

**box** 1

### **Memoir Volume 3**

**Unit Date** c. 1865

**box** 1

### **Journal [Blue]**

**Unit Date** 1864

**box** 1

### **Journal [White]**

**Unit Date** 1856-1873

**box** 1

### **Journal [Day by Day]**

**Unit Date** 1861

**box** 1