

Collection: FRANCIS C. ^{Christian} CLEWELL PAPERS
DeSoto County, Mississippi; St. Louis, Missouri;
Sandusky Bay, Johnson's Island, Ohio

P.C.140.1

1860-1867

Physical Description: 177 items, including correspondence, newspaper clippings, receipts, broadside, and miscellaneous items.

Acquisition: Gift of Mrs. Andrew J. Howell, Wilmington, N. C., 30 September 1943

Description: Although a native of North Carolina, Francis C. ^{Christian} Clewell (1842-1867) was a member of the Headquarters, 1st Missouri Cavalry, C.S.A., during the Civil War. Joining as a Sergeant-Major in 1861, he became a Lieutenant in May, 1863, during the Vicksburg Campaign. In the course of the war he was captured three times by Union forces--he escaped the first time he was captured, was exchanged the second time, and was released at the war's end after his third capture.

The correspondence (1860-1867) consists mainly of letters from Clewell to his mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. D. M. Clewell of Salem, North Carolina, and to his sisters, also in North Carolina. There are, however, letters to Clewell from his brother in Iowa, his cousin in Pennsylvania, and from two friends in the north. Other letters in the collection include several between his sisters and mother, from his friends in St. Louis to his mother, and from his friends in the army to his family.

The correspondence can be divided roughly into three main subject areas. The first area (July 3, 1862-May 31, 1863) is Clewell's accounts of the various camps in Mississippi where his unit was stationed before and during the Vicksburg Campaign. Although the letters concern mainly personal matters, he does give some sidelights into the camp life and attitude of the soldiers. Food, clothes, prices for various items, and his duties in the camp are some of the most frequently discussed topics. Very little information about any actual military engagement is given. Clewell does mention the Battle of Corinth and the Vicksburg Campaign, particularly the Battle at Champion Hill (Letter of March 16, 1864).

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The second subject is Clewell's account of life on Johnson's Island in Sandusky Bay, Ohio, from his capture on June 2, 1863, to December 7, 1864. This was the second time that Clewell had been captured--he escaped after two days imprisonment in May, 1863. All except one of his letters give an account of generally good treatment in the prison; however, on November 13, 1864, his sister Maggie sends to her mother a transcript of one of his letters that showed a very gloomy picture of prison life. The transcription was from a letter which he had written in starch between the lines of the normal ink. The prisoners hoped to avoid the Union censors through this method of writing. After being exchanged in December, 1864, Clewell returned to his regiment in Mississippi. He was captured again in the spring of 1864 and was imprisoned on an island in the Gulf of Mexico before being released. Only one letter written during this last imprisonment (April 16, 1865) is included in the collection.

Of particular interest in the second subject area are the letters that Clewell received while in prison in Ohio from friends and a cousin in the north. M. E. Nelson wrote in a letter of March 18, 1864: "I am thankful you are still spared and hope you may be converted from the 'error of your views' and learn to look upon northerners and northern principles in a different light." The same correspondent wrote on July 29 that a box had been sent to Clewell containing "Coffee, Tea, Sugar, Tobacco--Crackers in two packages, Dried beef, Can of pickels--Bay rum, one cure paper--one package envelopes $\frac{1}{2}$ doz pens--Comb--pins cushion, one hand towel--one loaf cake, Packages of cakes, Black hat--& the apples which though rather small I thought you'd relish."

The last subject area concerns Clewell's activities after the end of the war (October 27, 1865-April 14, 1867). For over a year he wandered around the area of the southern Mississippi River, not holding any particular job. Meridian, Holly Springs, and Bennetts Landing, Mississippi, Memphis, Tennessee, and the Steamer Alice Dean on the Ohio River are all locations for his correspondence. From the summer of 1866 to March, 1867, he was employed on a plantation in DeSoto County, Mississippi, as the manager. After killing a Negro on the plantation, in self-defense according to Clewell, he went to St. Louis. Civil authorities had freed him in the case, but he was afraid he would be tried again by a military court. He had planned to leave St. Louis and search for gold; however, he died in April, 1867. The newspaper accounts of his death called it suicide due to a self-administered overdose of morphine. As can be seen from ten letters, however, his friends in St. Louis believed his death to be an accident.

Finding Aids

Main Entry Card

Geographic Cards

DeSoto County, Mississippi

St. Louis, Missouri

Johnson's Island, Sandusky Bay, Ohio

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Finding Aids (Cont'd)

Subject Cards

AGRICULTURE--General--Cotton, DeSoto County, Mississippi, 1866-1867
HEALTH AND MEDICINE--Diseases--Cholera, Small Pox, Treatments
LAND--Plantation Management--DeSoto County, Mississippi, 1866-1867
MINES AND MINING--Gold--Broadside--New Mexico, March, 1867
WAR--CIVIL--Battles--Champion Hill, Battle in Vicksburg Campaign
WAR--CIVIL--Battles--Corinth, Mississippi
WAR--CIVIL--Battles--Vicksburg, Mississippi
WAR--CIVIL--Camps, Various Camps in Mississippi, 1862-1863
WAR--CIVIL--Letters from northern friends to a Confederate
prisoner, 1863-1864
WAR--CIVIL--Prisons--Johnson's Island, Sandusky Bay, Ohio
August 12, 1863- October 24, 1864
WAR--CIVIL--Prisons--Military Prison Ship, Island, Gulf of Mexico,
April 16, 1865
WAR--CIVIL--Units--Headquarters, 1st Missouri Cavalry, C.S.A.

Finding Aid completed 10 October 1967 by Betty H. Carter.