

DAVIS, FREDERIC E.
Frederic E. Davis papers, 1860-1863

Emory University
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Davis, Frederic E.
Title: Frederic E. Davis papers, 1860-1863
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 356
Extent: .5 linear feet (1 box) and 1 oversized papers box and 1 oversized papers folder (OP) ; 1 microfilm reel (MF)
Abstract: Papers of Union soldier Frederick E. Davis who served in the 4th Rhode Island Infantry Regiment during the Civil War.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

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Additional Physical Form

Also available on microfilm.

Source

Gift, 1960.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Frederic E. Davis papers, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by Susan Potts McDonald, March 10, 2004.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Frederic E. Davis (died March 17, 1863), 4th Rhode Island Infantry Regiment, Company Q., later Company A. Still later (see letter April 3, 1862), he became an ordinary seaman and served thereafter on various gunboats on the Ohio, the Mississippi, and smaller rivers in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. He participated in the action that resulted in the surrender of Arkansas Post, January 11, 1863. He was wounded in action at Fort Pemberton, Mississippi on March 15 and died two days later, March 17, 1863.

Scope and Content Note

The collections consists of the papers of Union soldier Frederick E. Davis from 1860-1863. Most letters are from Davis to his family in Providence, Rhode Island, and describe activities on and off the vessels of the Mississippi Squadron, draft riots in St. Louis, Missouri, conditions at sea, desertion of his fellow seamen, and preparations for the Siege of Vicksburg. His diary (1862-1863) also describes his war activities. A journal (1860-1861) describes his voyage to the coast of Africa and Arabia. Letters to his parents written after his death are from shipmates and fellow officers, including a letter from the wife of Brigadier General Clinton Fisk. The muster roll was captured from the 24th Arkansas Infantry Regiment; the photograph and obituary are of Davis.

Container List

Letters written by Frederic E. Davis, 1861-1863

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	1860, September 3. Zanzibar [coast of East Africa], On board the Barque Maryland after a 104 day passage. Then on to Musqat in Arabia. 1 letter.
1	2	1861, October 10-19. Avenue House, Washington, D. C. Camped temporarily at Kendall Green, looking about the capitol, buying tents and horses and at Camp Casey. 2 letters.
1	3	1861, October 29. Bladensburg, Maryland This is a secession place. His horse ran away and in doing so injured Frederic's ankle. 1 letter.
1	4	1861, November 6-28. Camp Casey. His ankle is mending. He apparently keeps books, perhaps payroll accounts. Mentions 3 desertions. His brigade has gone to Springfield, Virginia; he could not go with them but will go soon. Expects a big battle. 4 letters.
1	5	1862, April 3. New Bedford. He is an ordinary seaman with "recommendation for a Lieutenant Clerk." "My heart is in this work, I shall try to do my duty," he writes. 1 letter.
1	6	1862, April 5-15. U. S. Receiving Ship Ohio. Rumors as to where they will be sent Cairo, New Orleans, "to join Commodore Foote's Western Fleet." 3 letters.
1	7	1862, April 22-May 31. On board Steamer Maria Denning. Cairo, Illinois. Had gone by railroad from Boston to Cairo, "with only about 25 running away" until they got to Mound City and "our Boys discovered 5 barrels of Whiskey." Many became drunk, jumped overboard, and were drowned. "We have lost about 60 in all." He is disappointed in not being on a "sea-going vessel"; many are in hospital with dysentery. On May 29 went down to Columbus, Kentucky, but returned to Cairo. They no longer had "a plank ashore" because "13 to 15 a night" ran away. 4 letters.
1	8	1862, June 10-July 16. U. S. Gunboat Lexington. Is happy to be off the "Maria Denning." Is "off Memphis, Tennessee" soon after capture of the city. The "people are proud, and it is galling to come down"; a "large and pretty place." Describes the "Lexington" and her exploits. Heard rumor that "Richmond was taken." Later (July 2) is up the White River where they did some fighting and had many sick, and also supplied General Curtis's "half-famished Army with provisions." 2 men killed instantly by guerrillas and another wounded. 5 letters.
1	9	1862, July 21-August 10. U. S. Gunboat Lexington, St. Louis, Missouri. Hears that "Rebels" had "retaken Henderson" and were "threatening Evansville." Mentions riots in St. Louis between strong Unionists and those opposed to draft. 4 letters.
1	10	August 27-September 13. U. S. Gunboat Lexington. Off Helena and 100 miles above Memphis. "Guerilla Bands are getting bold on the Ohio, Missouri, Mississippi, Arkansas & Yazoo rivers," he says (Aug. 27), off Helena. August 29. The boat, having had trouble with mud valve that would not close, was 100

- miles above Memphis. September 13. He is off Helena, not having set foot on shore for 7 weeks. Describes their new Flag Ship, the "Eastport." They have "9 transports load with Prisoners," a "motley crowd." 6 letters.
- 1 11 1862, September 26-October 23. Off Cairo, IL, or near there. He had been to Vicksburg and thought they would not go back until cold weather, and then with sufficient land forces to hold the place after it was captured. October 7. He writes that he is to have "a first class 'Petty' Officers Billet," and become a 'Yeoman' at \$24.00 per month. 3 letters.
- 1 12 1862, November 12-24. U. S. Gunboat 'Baron De Kalb' off Cairo, Illinois He describes circumstances of his promotion to Acting Master's Mate and his transfer from the "Lexington" to the "Baron De Kalb." 2 letters.
- 1 13 1862, December 7-22. Off mouth of Yazoo River. Had been coming down from Cairo since Nov. 24. He expects to remain 10 miles above Vicksburg until time to attack. He asks for news of the war. "We are out of the world, as regards news. We never hear anything unless it transpires right aboard of our own boat." (December 18) He describes the sinking of the Union Gunboat "Cairo." Includes poem "Bonny Eloise" written by Davis on December 17. 5 letters.
- 1 14 1863, January 11. U. S. Gunboat "Baron de Kalb" at "Arkansas Post," White River? Describes in detail an engagement with enemy batteries in White River. 1 letter.
- 1 15 1863, January 14-19. "De Kalb" in White River. Visits scene of earlier battle. Will have to go "somewhere" for repairs. They found "St. Charles" evacuated, the enemy having gone to "Devall's Bluff" 73 miles farther up. He says: if Vicksburg does not fall & the Mississippi be open to commerce the West will go with the South. 2 letters.
- 1 16 1863, January 29-February 4. "De Kalb" at mouth of Yazoo River. Tells of preparation for fight for Vicksburg, digging canal, etc. and of the running of the "blockade" by the "Queen of the West." He gives names of the gunboats, rams, and monitors of the "Mississippi Squadron." 2 letters.
- 1 17 1863, February 17. "De Kalb" up the Coldwater River in "the heart of the Confederacy." 1 letter.
- 1 18 1863, March 2-12. The "great expedition has started," sailed from Helena on Feb 20th down the Mississippi River to Coldwater River. "De Kalb" in the Tallahatchie River. They are "feeling" the enemies' strength and expect a decisive battle within 24 hours. They have been away from the fleet for over a month and are damaged by trees, etc. in the narrow rivers. He was mortally wounded March 15. 2 letters.
- 1 19 Undated fragment

Letters to Frederic Davis from his parents

- 1 20 1862, July 20: Henry D. Davis (Providence, Rhode Island). City is offering a large bounty, but will probably have to resort to a draft.

- 1 20 1862, September 21: Harriet G. Davis, mother of Frederic (Providence, Rhode Island) She says: "we Yankies think to much of mony and not enough of what is for the good of our nation and that is why this awful war is upon us now."
- 1 20 1863, February 15: Harriet G. Davis (Providence, Rhode Island). She says "I think that this war would have ended before this if we had not so many traitors among us...making their thousands out of it..."

Letters to the parents of Frederic Davis concerning his death and burial:

- 1 21 1863, March 18: John V. Johnston, 1st Lieutenant and Executive officer of the U. S. G. B. "Baron de Kalb" (off Fort Greenwood, Tallahatchie River, Mississippi). Attached is an obituary in which this letter is quoted.
- 1 21 1863, March 23: Mrs. Clinton B. Fisk, wife of Brig. Gen. Fisk ("Shell Mound Place," Tallahatchie River, Mississippi).
- 1 21 1863, March 25: J. W. Meacham, master's mate (Fort Greenwood)
- 1 21 1863, April 19: John G. Walker, Lieutenant Commander (U. S. G. B. Baron de Kalb)
- 1 21 no date: John V. Johnston, 1st Lieutenant and 12 other fellow officers
- 1 21 1863, September 14: Stephen J.W. Tabor, Treasury Dept.
- 1 21 1868, December 31, Stephen J.W. Tabor, Treasury Dept.

Diaries/Journals

- 1 "Journal of a cruise to the East Coast of Africa and Arabia" (August 19, 1860-March 4, 1861) and a letter from Davis to his parents written Sept. 30, 1860 from Zanzibar.
- 1 Original Civil War Diary of Frederic E. Davis (November 17, 1862-March 13, 1863) Brief entries about affairs of ship, duties, weather, sights on shore and on the rivers. Also includes miscellaneous jottings, lists, accounts, chart of signal flags.
- 1 Transcript of Civil War Diary of Frederic E. Davis (November 17, 1862-March 13, 1863)

Military records

- 1 25 Pass, October 5, 1862
- 1 25 Appointment, acting Master's Mate, U.S. Mississippi Squadron, November 6, 1862
- 1 25 Order to report to duty, U.S. Gunboat Baron de Kalb, Cairo, Illinois, November 11, 1862
- 1 25 Appointment, acting Master's Mate, Mississippi Squadron, November 12, 1862
- 1 25 Order, Head Quarters Providence Marine Corps of Artillery, May 26, 1864
- 1 25 Quarter Bill, Supply Division, Port Side, n.d.

Photographs

- 1 26 Frederick E. Davis
- 1 27 Frederick E. Davis, ambrotype in case
- 1 28 Alice W. Slack (?), May 25, 1857, ambrotype (no case, broken)

Certificate

- OP1 1 Frederick E. Davis, State of Rhode Island, May 4, 1869

Captured records

- 1 29 Special order 224, Resignation of Confederate soldier, Lieutenant H. R. Owens Company H., Portlock's Regiment, Arkansas Volunteer, September 25, 1862 [Davis notes on order "Captured at Devall's Bluff, Arkansas, White River, January 16, 1863"]
- OP2 - Muster Roll of Company H, 24th Arkansas Infantry Regiment, December 31, 1862

Memorabilia [in small box]

- Box of tooth powder
 - Sewing kit (in cloth bag)
 - Small ink bottles (in cloth bag)
 - Mini ball
 - Roll of checked woolen cloth
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