

THURSTON, CHARLES BROWN, 1843-1920.

Charles Brown Thurston papers, 1861-1869

Emory University
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Thurston, Charles Brown, 1843-1920.
Title: Charles Brown Thurston papers, 1861-1869
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 97
Extent: .25 linear feet (1 box) ; 1 bound volume (BV)
Abstract: Papers of prohibitionist and abolitionist Charles Brown Thurston, member of the 13th Maine Infantry Regiment and later sergeant in the Union Army.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

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Source

Unknown.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Charles Brown Thurston papers, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by SS, 1972.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Charles Brown Thurston was born June 10, 1843, the son of Brown Thurston, a Portland, Maine, printer, and Amanda Chapman Thurston. After completing school, Charles worked for his

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father as a printer and bookkeeper. He was mustered into the 13th Maine Infantry Regiment on December 12, 1861. The 13th Maine was raised by Neal Dow, an ardent prohibitionist and abolitionist. Brown Thurston was a friend of Dow's and shared his views. The regiment trained at Camp Beauford in Augusta, Maine, and on February 18, 1862 they left for Ship Island, Mississippi. Charles was a clerk to the officers and spent much of his time in writing reports; but he did make several excursions to the surrounding areas. On July 20, 1862, the regiment was sent to Forts Jackson and St. Philip to guard the entrance to New Orleans. Here they acted as an artillery unit in preventing ships from slipping in or out of the city.

On October 15, 1862, Charles was appointed clerk to General Dow and left for Pensacola, Florida. It was at this point that Charles' dislike for Dow became obvious, and he was pleased to return to Fort St. Philip on December 14, 1862. On August 3, 1863, Charles was promoted to sergeant and on the 27th the Regiment was ordered to New Orleans. Here they performed provost duty while preparing to enter the Red River expedition. Charles became ill and was unable to accompany his regiment when they left for Texas, but was given command of two African American work details building levees north of Donaldsonville, Louisiana. He was reunited with his regiment when they were transferred to Virginia in July, 1864. Here they performed garrison duty of Sheridan's supply line. Charles was mustered out on January 6, 1865.

After leaving the army Charles returned to work for his father for a short time then lived with relatives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from 1866 to 1869. He then returned to Portland. He married Carrie Thaxter Lincoln and had two sons, Edwin Brown and Arthur Lincoln Thurston. He died January 20, 1920.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of papers of Charles Brown Thurston from 1861-1868. The papers include 302 letters, two drawings, and one bound volume. One hundred sixty of the letters are from Charles Brown Thurston to his family and friends. He goes into great detail in describing his activities and those of the armies in nearby areas. He tells of the ships that passed the forts and the activities in New Orleans. His position as clerk gave him opportunity to know both the men and their officers and engage in conversation with them. His letters are well written and informative as to the conditions under which he lived. He especially took great pains to tell his father of the lives and activities of the African American troops. Thurston was never involved in any major battles or suffered extreme privation so that his letters remain expectant and optimistic. Charles' family, including his father Brown Thurston, his brother George Francis Thurston, and his sisters Clara, Minnie, and Jessie, wrote Charles the war news which they received as well as the "gossip" of Portland. Charles had friends in other parts of the Union Army who also sent him frequent letters. These include Charles Oleson, a hospital steward stationed in Washington, D. C., and Reuel W. Waters who spent most of his army years in Virginia. The two drawings are of Fort Jackson and Fort St. Philip. The bound volume is an honors paper prepared by Philip Racine at Bowdoin College in 1964 entitled Charles Brown Thurston's Correspondence, 1861-1864. It is an edited typescript of approximately 80 of Thurston's letters with a description of the collection and narrative background.

Arrangement Note

Correspondence arranged in chronological order.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	1861 October - April 1862
1	2	1862 May - July
1	3	1862 August - September
1	4	1862 October - November
1	5	1862 December - January 1863
1	6	1863 February
1	7	1863 March
1	8	1863 April - May
1	9	1863 June - September
1	10	1863 October - December
1	11	1864
1	12	1865 - 1869
1	13	Miscellany, undated, drawings
1	BV1	1964 Bowdoin College Honor's Thesis, <i>Charles Brown Thurston's Correspondence, 1861-1864</i>
