

---

## **Obadiah Ethelbert Baker Papers: Finding Aid**

Processed by Olga Tsapina in 2002 and updated by Diann Benti in 2016.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Manuscripts Department

The Huntington Library

1151 Oxford Road

San Marino, California 91108

Phone: (626) 405-2191

Email: [reference@huntington.org](mailto:reference@huntington.org)

URL: <http://www.huntington.org>

2002

The Huntington Library. All rights reserved.

---

## Overview of the Collection

**Title:** Baker, Obadiah Ethelbert Papers

**Date (inclusive):** 1859-1923

**Collection Number:** mssBaker papers

**Creator:** Baker, Obadiah Ethelbert, 1838-1923.

**Extent:** Approximately 350 pieces 2 boxes

**Repository:** The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department

1151 Oxford Road

San Marino, California 91108

Phone: (626) 405-2191

Email: [reference@huntington.org](mailto:reference@huntington.org)

URL: <http://www.huntington.org>

**Abstract:** This collection contains the papers of Civil war soldier and teacher Obadiah E. Baker and his wife, Melissa Dalton Baker, of Iowa and, later, Northern California, and their family between the late 1850s and early 1900s. Notably, the collection contains letters kept by Obadiah Baker to his wife, while serving in the 2nd Iowa Cavalry Regiment, which reflect on military operations on the Western front, camp life, and Civil War hospitals and medical care.

**Language:** English.

### Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

### Publication Rights

The Huntington Library does not require that researchers request permission to quote from or publish images of this material, nor does it charge fees for such activities. The responsibility for identifying the copyright holder, if there is one, and obtaining necessary permissions rests with the researcher.

### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item]. Obadiah Ethelbert Baker Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

### Acquisition Information

The collection was purchased from Argonaut Book Shop in June 1966.

### Biographical note

Civil War soldier and teacher Obadiah Ethelbert Baker (1838-1923), a native of Eden, New York, moved to Iowa with his parents, settling in Strawberry Point in 1856. At 21, he began teaching a class of 72 students at the local district school. In 1860, he married Melissa Dalton (1844-1918). In 1860s, Melissa, formerly a student of his, taught school in the same district.

In September 1862, Baker enlisted in the Second Iowa Cavalry Regiment. The regiment was organized at Davenport in August and September 1861 and was posted at Benton Barracks, Missouri until February 1862, when it moved to New Madrid. The regiment took part in the operations at New Madrid, Island No. 10, and the advance on and siege of Corinth, Mississippi, the action at Iuka, the battle of Corinth, Mississippi, Grant's Central Mississippi Campaign, and operations in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee. In 1863, Baker spent several months in various hospitals in Missouri and Tennessee. He was honorably discharged in Washington, D.C., in April 1865.

After the war Baker taught school in Mississippi and then returned to Iowa. In 1874, the Bakers left Iowa for Shasta County, California. In Shasta and Modoc Counties, Baker taught school and sold farm implements and medicines. In 1900, the Bakers moved to Kenwood, California. Obadiah E. Baker was active in Civil War veteran affairs. Baker died on January 25, 1923.

Obadiah and Melissa Baker had four children: a son who died in infancy, daughters Grace Amelia (1870-1876) and Caroline Melissa (1866-1896), and son Milo Samuel (1868-1961), a renowned botanist. Between 1881 and 1887, Caroline and Milo attended San Jose Normal School.

During the Civil War, Baker and his wife exchanged journals containing daily letters to each other. In 1870-1880s, while working on a book of memoirs, Baker made fair copies of some of these letter books.

### Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of correspondence and individual manuscript volumes of Civil war soldier and teacher Obadiah E. Baker and his wife, Melissa Dalton Baker, of Iowa and Northern California, and their family between the late 1850s and

---

early 1900s.

Notably, the collection contains daily letters kept by Obadiah and Melissa Baker during the Civil War in the form of journals, which they exchanged with each other. Some of these volumes are fair copies of the letter books made by Obadiah Baker in the 1870s-1880s, while working on a memoir. Topics covered in the letters include military operations of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment on the Western front; camp life of a soldier: payments, foraging; drills and inspections, picket duty roads, recreations, hospitals, medical care; doctors and nurses, especially work of Catholic Sisters of Charity; and Confederate prisoners.

In addition, there are poems (nearly 200 loose pieces), notebooks, and essays of Obadiah Baker, often reflecting on the Civil War experience and memory in the 1860s-1900s; family correspondence chiefly sent between the Bakers and their children, while the children attended the San Jose Normal School in the 1880s. The correspondence touches on family news, Baker's teaching experience, and, occasionally, business and financial affairs.

#### **Organization and Arrangement**

This collection consists of correspondence and individual manuscript volumes and is organized in the following manner:

- Box 1: Civil War journals of Obadiah E. Baker
- Box 2: Correspondence, manuscripts, and journals of the Baker family

#### **Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](#).

#### **Subjects**

Baker, Obadiah Ethelbert

Baker, Melissa Dalton

Baker family.

United States. Army Iowa Cavalry Regiment, 2nd (1861-1865)

Schools - Iowa - 19th century.

Corinth, Battle of, Corinth, Miss., 1862 -- Personal narratives.

United States - History - Civil War, 1861 - 1865 - Personal narratives.

United States - History - Civil War, 1861 - 1865 - Medical care.

United States - History - Civil War, 1861 - 1865 - Literature and the war.

Iowa - Social life and customs.

Mississippi - Description and travel - Civil War, 1861 - 1865.

Tennessee - Description and travel - Civil War, 1861 - 1865.

Missouri - Description and travel - Civil War, 1861 - 1865.

California - Description and travel.

California - Social life and customs -- 19th century.

#### **Forms/Genres**

Memoirs -- United States -- 19th century.

Letters (correspondence) -- United States 19th century.

Poems -- United States -- 19th century.

Diaries -- United States -- 19th century.

Newspaper -- clippings -- United States.

Photographs -- United States.

Family papers -- United States.

#### **Additional Contributors**

Baker, Melissa Dalton

---

### **Civil War journals of Obadiah E. Baker**

#### **Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically.

- 
- Folder 1                    **Journal No. 1. Strawberry Point, Iowa. (1859, Dec. 6 - 1860, Apr. 13) and Manchester, Iowa (1862, Apr. 4-7). 1859-1862, 1874**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 32 leaves. 18 x 14 cm  
                                 **Scope and Content Note**  
Journal fills half of a notebook. Recorded topics include: life in Strawberry Point, Iowa: teaching district school; meetings at Methodist Church; Temperance lecture; Courting Melissa and troubles at school. (ff. 1-26); Camp at Manchester, Iowa; and a few miscellaneous accounting entries, 1874.
- Folder 1a                   **Journal No. 2. [fair copy]. 1862, Sept. 19 - Nov. 5**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 74 leaves. 24 x 20 cm  
                                 **Scope and Content Note**  
Recorded topics include: luka, Sept. 19-20. Battle of Corinth, Oct. 3-4; pursuit to Ripley, Oct. 5-12; Capture of Ripley and Orizaba, Nov. 2. Also contains the poems "Battle of Corinth" and "After the Battle."
- Folder 2                    **Journal No. 2A [original pocket diary]. 1862, Sept. 16-28**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 16 leaves. 15 x 9 cm
- Folder 2a                   **Journal No. 3 [fair copy]. 1862, Nov. 6 - Dec. 24**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 84 leaves. 22 x 18 cm  
                                 **Scope and Content Note**  
Recorded topics include: Grant's Central Mississippi Campaign: LaGrange, Coldwater, Hudsonville, reconnaissance to Holly Springs, Holly Springs, expedition to Ripley, Waterford, Tallahatchie River, Oxford, expedition against Mobile & Ohio Railroad, Ripley.
- Folder 3                    **Journal No. 3A [original pocket diary]. 1862, Dec. 16-30**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 18 leaves 15 x 9 cm.
- Folder 4                    **Journal No. 3B [composition book]. 1862, Nov. 5 - Dec. 17**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 56 leaves. 21 x 17 cm
- Folder 4a                   **Journal No. 4 [fair copy]. 1863, Jan. 23-Mar 17**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 41 leaves. 21 x 9 cm  
                                 **Scope and Content Note**  
Recorded topics include: camp life; hospital in Germantown, Tennessee.
- Folder 4b                   **Journal No. 5 [notebook]. 1863, Mar. 18 - June 2**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 124 pages 21 x 17 cm  
                                 **Scope and Content Note**  
Recorded topics include: Overton hospital, Memphis, Tennessee; Catholic Sisters of Charity; and Lawson hospital, St. Louis, Missouri.
- Folder 5                    **Journal No. 5A [original pocket diary]. 1863, May 18 - July 16**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 14.5 x 9 cm
- Folder 6                    **Journal No. 6 [fair copy notebook]. 1863, June 3 - Sept. 8**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 152 pages, 21 x 7 cm  
                                 **Scope and Content Note**  
Lawson Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri.
- Folder 7                    **Journal No. 7 [original pocket diary]. 1863, July 26 - Sept. 7**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 15 x 8 cm
-

- Folder 8                    **Journal No. 8 [original pocket diary]. 1864, Mar 7 - 31**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 14.5 x 9 cm
- Folder 9                    **Journal No. 9A [original pocket diary]. 1864, May 3 - 30**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 14.5 x 9 cm
- Folder 10                  **Journal No. 9 [fair copy notebook].1864, May 3 - Aug. 28**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 21 x 7 cm  
                                 **Scope and Content Note**  
                                 Recorded topics include: furlough; camp at Washington, D.C.
- Folder 11                  **Journal No. 10: Giesboro Point, Va. Washington, D.C. [original pocket diary]. 1864, Aug. 3 Sept. 16**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 14.5 x 9 cm
- Folder 12                  **Journal No. 10A: Giesboro Pt. Washington, D.C.[fair copy]. 1864, Aug. 29 - Dec. 4**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 25 x 20 cm
- Folder 13                  **Journal No. 11. Giesboro Pt. Washington, D.C. [original pocket diary]. 1865, Feb. 26 - Apr. 7**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 14.5 x 9 cm
- Box 2                        **Correspondence, manuscripts, and journals of the Baker family**  
                                 **Arrangement**  
                                 Arranged with envelopes (containing volumes and larger items) first, followed by folders. The folders are chiefly arranged by author and then chronologically.
- Envelope 14                **Baker, Obadiah E. Notebook chiefly containing miscellaneous lines of poetry. 1891-1897**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 12 leaves. 21 x 11 cm  
                                 **Note**  
                                 The envelope lists 2 volumes; 1 volume is missing as of 2004.
- Envelope 15                **[MISSING] Baker, Obadiah E. Notebook. 1900, not after**  
Envelope 16                **Baker, Obadiah E. 2 notebooks chiefly containing miscellaneous lines of poetry. 1903**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 15 x 9 cm
- Envelope 17                **Baker, Obadiah E. Notebook chiefly containing miscellaneous lines of poetry. 1900-1923**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 21 x 9 cm
- Envelope 18                **Notebook of a trip to California. 1876**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 15 x 8 cm  
                                 Includes entries of a trip from Strawberry Point, Iowa, to Northern California (March 7-March 31, 1876), presumably penned by a relative or friend of the Bakers.
- Envelope 19                **Baker, Obadiah E. Pocket diaries with entries. 1900, not after**  
                                 **Physical Description:** 15 x 9 cm
- Envelope 20                **Baker, Obadiah E. Notebook with miscellaneous entries/accounts. 1914 and undated.**  
                                 **Scope and Content Note**  
                                 Notebook with miscellaneous entries with poems, including "Death of Lincoln," family records, Theodore Roosevelt, and the Baker Family
-

- Envelope 21      **Baker, Obadiah E. Miscellaneous documents, tax receipts, and land records. 1867-1910**  
Miscellaneous documents including bonds, receipts, land records, state and county taxes (Modoc Co., Cal.), a report of the Treasurer of the 1st Congregational Church of Las Guilers, California (1 p.), poem: Life's Mystery, and a register of school taught in Putnam, Iowa in 1867 (1 p.)
- Envelope 22      **Baker, Melissa Dalton. Journal/letters to Obadiah E. Baker. 1862, Aug. 6-12**  
Letters to Obadiah Baker with war news and reflecting pride in husband.
- Envelope 23      **Photographs of Baker family. [Approximately 1960s-1917]**  
Four photographs consisting of "Mr. and Mrs. Baker in front of Kenwood Home, Aug 1917," a carte-de-visite portrait and a later portrait of the same unidentified man, presumably Obadiah Baker, and a group portrait of an unidentified family in front of a house.
- Folder 1      **Baker, Caroline Melissa. 9 letters to Obadiah E. Baker chiefly with school news; mentions her painting. 1882-1887**
- Folder 2      **Baker, Caroline Melissa and Baker, Melissa Dalton. Letter to Obadiah E. Baker. 1886, Aug. 16**
- Folder 3      **Baker, Caroline Melissa and Baker, Milo Samuel. 3 letters to Obadiah E. Baker with school news. 1882-1883**
- Folder 4      **Baker, David. Letter to Obadiah E. Baker regarding the estate of John Baker, Strawberry Hill, Iowa. 1880, Sept. 17**
- Folder 5      **Baker, John. Letter to Obadiah and Melissa Baker with family news, Strawberry Hill, Iowa. 1877, January 25**
- Folder 6      **Baker, John. Letter to Obadiah and Melissa Baker with family news, Strawberry Hill, Iowa. 1877, April 15**
- Folder 7      **Baker, Melissa. Letter to Milo Samuel Baker. [between 1900 and 1918] March 27**  
With fragment of letter "To Joe," August 22, 1886.
- Folder 8      **Baker, Melissa Dalton Letter to Obadiah E. Baker with family news. 1881, Dec. 11**
- Folder 9      **Baker, Melissa Dalton and Baker, Caroline Melissa, 21 letters to Obadiah E. Baker. 1882-1897**
- Folder 10      **Baker, Milo Samuel Letter to Melissa Dalton Baker. 1889, Feb. 3**
- Folder 11      **Baker, Milo Samuel. 5 letters to Obadiah E. Baker. 1883-1886**
- Folder 12      **Baker, Caroline Melissa, Baker, Milo Samuel, and Baker, Melissa Dalton. 6 letters to Obadiah E. Baker. 1882-1883**
- Folder 13      **Baker, Milo Samuel and Baker, Melissa Dalton. 4 letters to Obadiah E. Baker. 1883-1886**
- Folder 14      **Baker, Obadiah E. Letter to Caroline and Melissa Baker regarding family's illnesses. 1879, May 4**
- Folder 15      **Baker, Obadiah E. Civil War journal fragments; contains letter to Melissa Baker. 1863-1865**  
**Physical Description:** 6 pieces.
- Folder 16      **Baker, Obadiah E. Fragment of a journal kept while traveling in Arkansas. [1870s?]**
- Folder 17      **Baker, Obadiah E. Fragments of Civil War memoir. Approximately 1900**
- Folder 18      **Baker, Obadiah E. Poems. 1859-1900 (?)**
- Folder 19      **Baker, Obadiah E. Poems 1860-1923**
- Folder 20      **Baker, Obadiah E. Poems. 1860-1923**
- Folder 21      **Baker, Obadiah E. Poems. 1900-1923**
- Folder 22      **Baker, Obadiah E. Poems. 1885-1890**
- Folder 22a      **Baker, Obadiah E. Poems. 1860-1923**
- Folder 23      **Baker, Obadiah E. Poems. 1860-1923**
- Folder 24      **Baker, Obadiah E. Poems. 1860-1923**
-

- Folder 25 **Baker, Samuel K. Legal document concerning money received from the estate of John Baker. 1852, Oct. 25**
- Folder 26 **Bell, S.G. Letter to Obadiah E. Baker 1899, Jan. 20**
- Folder 27 **Clark, Mary A. Letter to John Baker and Ruth Baker with school news. 1879, May 11**
- Folder 28 **Haylin, N.L. Letter to Obadiah E. Baker regarding veterans. 1899, June 21**
- Folder 29 **Morley, A.E. Letter to Obadiah E. Baker (?). 1883, May 7**
- Folder 30 **Willard, Frances Elizabeth Letter to Sarah J. Churchill on Woman's Christian Temperance Union letterhead. 1889, July 1**
- Folder 31 **Willard, Frances Elizabeth Letter to Sarah J. Churchill on Woman's Christian Temperance Union letterhead. 1890(?) Apr. 9**
- Folder 32 **Baker, Obadiah E. Miscellaneous essays. 1859-1860s**  
**Scope and Content Note**  
11 items. Includes school compositions; speeches, articles written for the Strawberry Point newspaper the Crystal Fountain.
- Folder 33 **Miscellaneous documents with photocopies of information about Obadiah Baker. 1891-1964**
- Folder 34 **Newspaper clipping re: provenance of the Baker papers. [1964?]**
- Folder 35 **Typescript index to Baker's Journals.**