Guide to the Foster Family Collection of Ambrose Bierce Materials M2146

Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: Department of Special Collections and University Archives
Title: Foster family collection of Ambrose Bierce materials
source: Elkhart County Historical Society
Identifier/Call Number: M2146
Physical Description: 3.0 Linear Feet: 2 boxes, 1 half-box, 1 flat box
Date (inclusive): 1858-1986

Content Description
The collection consists of correspondence (including one letter from Ambrose Bierce to a family member), photographs, maps, field notes, receipts, dispatches, telegrams, and printed material, chiefly relating to the Civil War career of Bierce as a surveyor as well as his extended family in Indiana, especially sister Almeda Sophia Bierce Pittenger (the original source of this collection), father Marcus Aurelius and brothers Albert and Addison Bierce.

Of particular note to Civil War historians are the series of maps produced by the Union army's Army of the Cumberland on the Chattanooga Campaign, reflecting the borders between Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. Of the paper and linen printed maps, some have annotations, and most credit Captain William Emery Merrill. A few note that they were created from information from "captured rebel engineers." There are also maps drawn by Bierce himself. Note that Stanford's Ambrose Bierce Papers also contain material concerning the Civil War, including the sketchbook Bierce kept while serving as a Union topographer with the staff of General Hazen.

D.W. "Jim" Strauss originally loaned this collection to the Elkhart County Historical Society in Bristol, Indiana on behalf of his late wife Betty Ann, who had inherited it from her mother Grace Juanita Bussing Foster, Almeda's daughter. After Strauss's death, their daughters Cindra Heston and Debra Van Dyke decided to donate the Bierce collection to Stanford.

Immediate Source of Acquisition
[identification of item], Foster family collection of Ambrose Bierce materials (M2146). Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

Conditions Governing Access
Open for research. Note that material must be requested at least 36 hours in advance of intended use.

Conditions Governing Use
While Special Collections is the owner of the physical and digital items, permission to examine collection materials is not an authorization to publish. These materials are made available for use in research, teaching, and private study. Any transmission or reproduction beyond that allowed by fair use requires permission from the owners of rights, heir(s) or assigns.

Immediate Source of Acquisition
Gift of Cindra Heston and Debra Van Dyke, 2016. Accession MSS 2016-175.

Biographical / Historical
Ambrose Gwinett Bierce was born in Meigs County, Ohio on June 24, 1842, the tenth child of Marcus Aurelius and Laura Sherwood Bierce. Little is known of his childhood; he became a printer's apprentice in Kosciusko County, Indiana, before entering the Kentucky Military Institute in 1859. Shortly before the outbreak of the Civil War, Bierce was a laborer and waiter in Elkhart, Indiana. Bierce enlisted in the 9th Regiment of Indiana Volunteers following Lincoln's call for volunteers and served for nearly the duration. Bierce was one of the few war veteran writers to have such front-lines experience, surviving some of the war's most bloody battles, including Shiloh, Missionary Ridge, and Chickamauga. Bierce progressed in rank from private to lieutenant and became the acting topographical engineer on Gen. W. B. Hazen's staff. At the battle of Kenesaw Mountain, Bierce sustained a near-fatal head wound from which it took months to recover. It is clear that his war experiences did much to inform his "Bitter Bierce" persona.

Following the war, Bierce became an aid to Treasury Department agents collecting abandoned Southern property. He joined Hazen's surveying expedition to the Far West in 1866 and stayed on in San Francisco working for the U.S. Mint. In San Francisco Bierce began to pursue his literary interests. In 1868, he succeeded his friend James T. Watkins as the editor of News-Letter. Bierce married Mary Ellen Day on Christmas Day, 1871, and eventually had three children, Day, Leigh, and Helen.

From 1872 to 1874, Bierce was in England writing for Tom Hood's Fun and James Mortimer's Figaro. He returned to San Francisco in September of 1875. He edited several magazines for the next years, including Argonaut and the Wasp; he also wrote his Prattle and The Dance of Death. Bierce became a columnist for the San Francisco Examiner in 1887 and continued to produce his own books and stories. He was sent in 1896 by the Examiner to Washington, D.C. to cover the
Railroad Funding Bill controversy. He stayed on in Washington as a political reporter for many years, all the while publishing his own literary work.

In late 1913, Bierce took a trip through the Southwest into Mexico where he mysteriously disappeared. It is likely that he became involved with the Mexican Revolution, traveling south with Pancho Villa and his troops, and met his fate at the hands of Federal soldiers near Chihuahua City.

**Related Materials**

Stanford Special Collections also holds the Ambrose Bierce Papers (M0080) https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/4082973

Letters to or from Bierce are also contained in the papers of David Starr Jordan, George Sterling, Eugene T. Sawyer, and Stephen Mallory White.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865.
Authors, American.
Bierce, Ambrose, 1842-1914?
Elkhart County Historical Society
Bierce family

**Series 1. Photographs**

**box 1, folder 1**

**Photographs AB1 - AB4**

Scope and Contents

“Mrs. Ambrose Bierce, Aunt Molly” – San Francisco, CA; E. H. Bierce, age 84; unknown family; “Uncle Will and Aunt Ann Good” – Mercer, photographer, Middleport, Ohio.

**box 1, folder 2**

**Photographs AB5 - AB8**

Scope and Contents

From brown envelope marked “Bierce”: Unknown woman; unknown man; unknown woman; “M. A. Bierce.”

**box 1, folder 3**

**Photographs AB9 - AB14**

Scope and Contents


**box 1, folder 4**

**Photographs AB15 - AB17 1913**

Scope and Contents

In envelope to Miss Hettie Pittinger, R. R. West, Warsaw, Indiana: “Grandpa Bierce” - H. C. Milice & Bro, photographer, Warsaw, IN; “Yours Truly, Lulu Tinsworth” (Bierce added in pencil), Uncle Al’s daughter – Elite, photographer, San Francisco; “Andrew Bierce” – Goff, photographer, Elkhart, IN.

**box 1, folder 5**

**Photographs AB18 - AB21 1912-1914**

Scope and Contents

Next four photos appear to be of the same gentleman: Unknown gentleman in chair – postcard to Miss Hettie Pittinger, Nove. 23, 3pm, 1914; unknown gentleman in chair – postcard not addressed or mailed; unknown gentleman with hat – postcard addressed to Miss Hettie Pittinger, Nov. 22, 1912; unknown gentleman in chair with hat – postcard not addressed.
Series 1. Photographs

box 1, folder 6  Photographs AB22 - AB25
Scope and Contents
“Yours Truly, A. S. Bierce” – Haussler, photographer, San Francisco; A S. Bierce in military uniform; “Carlton A. Bierce” – Oakland, CA; Dag type of unknown older woman (Grandmother Bierce?); “Grandmother Bierce” – H. C. Milice & Bro., photographic artists, Warsaw, IN.

box 1, folder 7  Photographs AB26 - AB29
Scope and Contents

box 1, folder 8  Photographs AB30 1858
Scope and Contents
Ink (?) drawing of unknown gentleman dated 1858.

box 1, folder 9  Photographs AB31
Scope and Contents
“Harrie Bierce, 70 years”

box 1, folder 10  Photographs AB32
Scope and Contents
“Laura Bierce, My Grandmother” – penciled to accentuate details.

box 1, folder 11  Photographs AB33
Scope and Contents
Unknown older gentleman – penciled to accentuate details, newspaper glued to back.

box 1, folder 12  Photographs AB34
Scope and Contents

box 1, folder 13  Photographs AB35
Scope and Contents
“Harrie Bierce, 70 years” (possibly unknown gentleman in postcard previously recorded)

box 1, folder 14  Photographs AB36
Scope and Contents

box 1, folder 15  Etching of California Authors
Scope and Contents
From photograph folder, etching includes Ambrose Bierce.

Series 2. Books and notebooks

box 1, folder 16  A. J. Bierce’s billfold (empty)

box 1, folder 17  Army Officer’s Pocket Companion and Manual for Staff Officers in the Field 1862
Scope and Contents
Ambrose Bierce's Field Book for Map Notes
Scope and Contents
Ambrose Bierce's filed book for map notes - signed "Lieut. A. G. Bierce A. Topl. Engr. Staff of Gen. Hazen." Includes drawings for Demi-Lune Post Pulaski, TN planned and constructed by A. G. Bierce; Cleveland, Tenn.; and Dallas, GA - good condition

Ambrose Bierce's signed copy of Gillespie's Land Surveying
Scope and Contents

Discharge papers, medical report, and equipment issuance 1864-1869
Scope and Contents

Sketch of the Environs of Murfreesboro, Tenn. by Capt. N. Michler (linen with pencil notations) September 1862
Topographical Sketch of the Battle Field of Stone River - Surveyed by Maj. J.F. Weyss, under direction of Capt. N. Michler (small linen)
Map of Chattanooga [Tennessee] & Vicinity, by Capt. Wm. E. Merrill, U.S. Engineers 08/12/1863
Map of Cleveland [Tennessee], by Capt. Wm. E. Merrill, U.S. Engineers (torn/damaged) 08/14/1863
Map of McLamore's Cove [i.e. McLemore Cove, Georgia], by Capt. Wm. E. Merrill, U.S. Engineers 08/26/1863
Map of Bridgeport and Trenton [Georgia-Alabama border], compiled under the direction of Capt. W. E. Merrill, U.S. Engineers 08/28/1863
Map of Stevenson, Alabama, compiled from Information, under the direction of Capt. W. E. Merrill, U.S. Engineers 08/29/1863
Map of Chattanooga [Tennessee] & Vicinity, compiled from the Latest Informations, under direction of Capt. W. E. Merrill 09/08/1863
Map of Bridgeport [Alabama] & Vicinity, compiled from the Latest Informations, under direction of Capt. W. E. Merrill, U.S. Engineers 09/08/1863
Map of A Part of Murray County, Georgia, compiled under the direction of Capt. W. E. Merrill, U.S. Engineers 04/23/1864
Map of 1st District, Campbell County, Georgia, Compiled under direction of Capt. W. E. Merrill (linen) 05/23/1864
Maps of Part of Cobb County, Georgia ; [one by] by H.C. Wharton (negative maps) 06/08/1896 ; 06/26/1864
Land Map of DeKalb County, Georgia 07/11/1864
Map of Atlanta [Georgia] 07/15/1864
Map of Chicamauga River [aka Chickamauga River, Tennessee] (small hand-drawn map)
Map of Dalton [Georgia] & vicinity, Compiled under direction of Capt. W. E. Merrill
Map of parts of Fulton, Fayette & Campbell Counties [Georgia], From Surveys, State Maps, and Information
Series 4. Civil War maps

box 3, folder 19 Five maps/battle plans by Ambrose Bierce
Scope and Contents
Includes Reynolds, Hazen, TTrain Depot, W. & A. RR, "Encampment" ; Includes Manchester, Lynchburg Road, Shelbyville Road, Duck River ; Bearings in Tennessee Valley ; Manchester to Normandy 08/06/1863 (signed) ; Lynchburg Road from Manchester S.W. 08/11/1863 (signed)

Series 5. Newspaper articles
Scope and Contents
newspapers and clippings in the collection date from 1881 to 1986 and are chiefly about Bierce or his family, including reports detailing his death which came to light c1919-1920 and a few of his own SF Examiner articles, mostly fragmented.

box 1, folder 20 Small Newspaper Clippings
box 3, folder 1 Large Newspaper Clippings
box 2, folder 34 Poem scrapbook
Scope and Contents
small notebook with poems cut from newspapers.

Series 6. Letters, correspondence, and receipts

box 2, folder 1 Engineer Orders and Circulars 1863 - 1864
Scope and Contents

box 2, folder 2 Pamphlet of Circulars and Orders 01/10/1864
Scope and Contents
Issued from Top. Engr. Office - Army of the Cumberland, Chattanooga, TN.

box 2, folder 3 Dispatches and Express Receipts 1863-1866
Scope and Contents
In envelope "Dispatches & Express Receipts"; American Telegraph Company to S. B. Eaton; Southwestern Telegraph Company; Adams Express Company from A. G. Bierce to S. B. Eaton; Southern Express Company from C. C. Marsh to Mrs. J. L. Watson; United States Express Company; U. S. Military Telegraph Office from Eaton to Bierce; American Telegraph Company to A. G. Bierce; Western Union Telegraph Company from Wazen to A. G. Bierce; American Telegraph Company from Luther Martin to S. B. Eaton.
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<th>Box Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>box 2, folder 4</td>
<td><strong>Engineering Orders 1863 - 1866</strong>&lt;br&gt;Scope and Contents</td>
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<td>box 2, folder 5</td>
<td><strong>Poem - The Awakening</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>List of Railroad, Bridges, and Tunnels 08/24/1863</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Germania Fire Insurance Co. Ad Blotter 07/01/1863</strong>&lt;br&gt;Scope and Contents</td>
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<td>box 2, folder 6</td>
<td><strong>Money Order Application</strong>&lt;br&gt;Scope and Contents</td>
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<td>box 2, folder 7</td>
<td><strong>Chicago Scale Co. Booklet</strong>&lt;br&gt;Scope and Contents</td>
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<td>box 2, folder 8</td>
<td><strong>Letter from Ambrose Bierce to Almeda Pittenger 12/07/1911</strong>&lt;br&gt;Scope and Contents</td>
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<td>box 2, folder 9</td>
<td><strong>Ambrose Bierce London Address</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Genealogical Notes and Letters</strong>&lt;br&gt;Scope and Contents</td>
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<td>box 2, folder 10</td>
<td><strong>Curtis Fenn Genealogical Research 1899</strong>&lt;br&gt;Scope and Contents</td>
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<td>box 2, folder 11</td>
<td><strong>Marcus Aurelius Letter 03/16/1869</strong>&lt;br&gt;Scope and Contents</td>
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<td>box 2, folder 12</td>
<td><strong>Marcus Aurelius Letter 12/05/1869</strong>&lt;br&gt;Scope and Contents</td>
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Abigail Bierce Letter 04/20/1894
Scope and Contents
Sent to Mrs. A. S. Pittenger re: general family activities.

Abigail Bierce Letter 03/24/1911
Scope and Contents
Sent to Mrs. A. S. Pittenger re: details of Libbie's funeral.

Addison Bierce Letters 1858 - 1913
Scope and Contents
Attempts to re-establish connection with estranged family; Son Harry's loss of wife and son; Divorce from Doretta; Working in circus known as Add Byron; More details of divorce; Travels and illness; experiences and reflection in travels; Ambrose is mentioned in regards to visiting battlefields.

Albert Bierce Letters 1876 - 1922
Scope and Contents
Re: photo of Ambrose; envelope to Mrs. William Bussing; letter to Mrs. Almeda Pittenger re: Carl and Lora, Ambrose in Washington; to Mrs. Almeda Pittenger re: Leigh's death, Carlton's marriage in Alaska, Ambrose Bierce's address; memories of youth, Ambrose's asthma; Ambrose in Washington, interested in publishing house in NY and Washington; re: Ab's death; Ab's illness; father's death and Ambrose in San Francisco; death of Gus; trip to Glacier Pt. and memories of mother.

Ida Letters 1910 - 1912
Scope and Contents
From Hotel Chapman, Los Angeles to mother - re: hotel, trip, illness; general info; from Redlands - includes price of groceries, letter to Nina Bussing, letter to mother and Grace re: trip to California; envelope postmarked March 21, 1912; letter to mother, Nela, and cousins from Portland, OR re: travels and family.

Old Cousins, Van Guilder, CCF 1895 - 1940
Scope and Contents
To Grace Bussing from Cora A. Van Gilder; to Almeda Pittenger from Columbus Fuller; to Grace Bussing from Cora A. Van Gilder; to Almeda Pittenger from C. C. Fuller; to Almeda Pittenger from C. Van Gilder; to A. S. Pittenger.

Letters to Almeda Pittenger 1895 - 1911
Scope and Contents
Group photo from Annie Mauck; two men in suits (man in wrinkled suit is Howard, the other is Will); Aunt Gracie; Aunt Meda; from Samuel and Hattie Cary.

E. Bierce Letters 1912 - 1918
Scope and Contents
Two letters on different dates addressed to Almeda Pittenger.

Ambrose Bierce and Charles Warren Stoddard
Scope and Contents
box 2, folder 25  Mrs. Earl Foster Research
Scope and Contents
Mrs. Earl Foster family records (poss. from Bierce family Bible), and assorted pages dealing with marriages, deaths, births - Ambrose's immediate family info.

box 2, folder 26  Family Correspondence and Newspaper Clippings
Scope and Contents
Miscellaneous family correspondence and newspaper clippings belonging to Almeda Pittenger.

box 2, folder 27  Letters of Inquiry
Scope and Contents
Letters of inquiry for collection from various scholars.

box 2, folder 28  Columbia University Correspondence 03/14/1961
Scope and Contents
Also includes Quarterly News Letter Spring 1961.

box 2, folder 29  Betty Strauss, Time Life Correspondence 1986
box 2, folder 30  Requiem to Jane Elliot Boyd Davis
box 2, folder 31  Pittenger Rent Receipt 01/03/1909
box 2, folder 32  Sir William Mulock's Philosophy of Life
box 2, folder 33  Assorted Correspondence and Papers
Scope and Contents
Letter with envelope to Grace Bussing from John Merrill Davis from Rio Grande, Ohio; Christmas postcard to Almeda Pittenger from cousin Jane Chinworth; photograph of Carlton Bierce; postcard photograph of unknown older woman and man; photograph of Ambrose Bierce (?); letter with envelope to Grace Bussing from John Merrill Davis; photograph of "Uncle Ambrose Bierce" - Nahl Bros. & Dickman: Artists and Photographers, San Francisco; photograph of Albert Bierce - Morse's Gallery of the Cumberland, Nashville, TN; photograph of Addison Bierce - Edward J. Cobb photographer, San Francisco; blank papers and envelope; jacket of accounts book; Indiana State "Chautauqua" Assembly program 1893; Year Book of the Ladies' Society of the First Presbyterian Church signed by Juanita Bussing Foster.

Series 7. Miscellaneous

box 1, folder 21  Original collection inventory, museum exhibition card, article photocopies
Scope and Contents
The collection inventory and plaque provided by Elkhart County Historical Museum. Newspaper articles regarding the museum's exhibit.

box 1, folder 19  Card/announcement, Mollie E. Day and Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Bierce
Scope and Contents
Possibly from the wedding of Mollie Day and Ambrose Bierce. Also included, two train tickets from the Lake Shore & Mich. Southern - Toledo to Chicago, South Bend to Goshen.

Series 8. Drafting tools and desk
These three-dimensional objects are currently housed at the David Rumsey Map Center (http://library.stanford.edu/rumsey).

Wood field desk for drafting—green felt lining, compartment for drafting implements and other supplies
Field glass in black case
Theodolite telescope in brown leather case
Survey/drafting instruments in velvet-lined case: 5 assorted drawing compasses; 1 six inch wooden ruler
Compass for drafting (metal)
Protractor: 180 degrees (metal)