

Henry O. Nightingale diaries MSS.002

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Language of Material: English

Contributing Institution: University of California, Merced Library

Title: Henry O. Nightingale diaries

creator: Nightingale, Henry O.

Identifier/Call Number: MSS.002

Physical Description: 3 digital objects(3 digital objects; 541 unique images total)

Date (inclusive): 1864-1865

Abstract: Henry O. Nightingale (1844-1919) and his family emigrated from Hawkhurst, County Kent, England, to the United States in 1849. He, his parents, and his younger brother arrived in New York from London aboard the Margaret Evans on June 30 when Henry was 5 years old. The family settled in Rochester, New York. An abolitionist, Nightingale joined the Northern army at the start of the American Civil War in 1861. In 1862 he joined the 108th New York Infantry Regiment. He fought in numerous battles, including Gettysburg, and on March 1, 1864 he was promoted to corporal. This collection consists of three digital objects: two handwritten diaries (1864-1865) and an undated portrait of Henry O. Nightingale with his saber and Union hat. A majority of entries in both diaries describe the weather and Nightingale's daily activities during his military service. Towards the front of the 1864 diary is a foldout assemblage of several newspaper articles and poems. The 1864 diary also includes descriptions of company and regimental movement, and of particular note is a description of Nightingale's injury during the Battle of the Wilderness in May of 1864, and the subsequent near-amputation of his left arm. Following this injury he spent 13 months in recovery at Stanton General Hospital in Washington D.C. Of significant note to the 1865 diary is a firsthand account of Abraham Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theatre. Nightingale was released from the hospital on June 2nd, 1865, and he married on July 6th, 1865.

Physical Description: Handwritten Civil War diaries and portrait. 1864 diary is leather-bound, soft-cover, pocket-sized, 5" x 3.25" x .75." Front inside cover includes foldout of newspaper clippings (poetry). 1865 diary is leather-bound, soft-cover, pocket-sized, 6"x 3"x .5." Portrait is 4" x 2 3/16," recto and verso.

Language of Material: Materials entirely in English.



Preferred Citation

The Henry O. Nightingale diaries, MSS 002, Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Merced, Library, 5200 North Lake Road, Merced, CA 95343.

Scope and Contents of Collection

The collection consists of three digital objects: two handwritten diaries (1864-1865) and an undated portrait of Henry O. Nightingale with his saber and Union hat. An abolitionist, Nightingale joined the Northern army at the start of the Civil War in 1861. In 1862 he joined the 108th New York Infantry Regiment. He fought in a dozen battles, including Gettysburg, and was promoted to corporal on March 1, 1864. A majority of entries in both diaries describe the weather and Nightingale's daily activities during his military service. Towards the front of the 1864 diary is a foldout assemblage of several newspaper articles and poems. The 1864 diary also includes descriptions of company and regimental movement, and of particular note is a description of Nightingale's injury during the Battle of the Wilderness in May of 1864, and the subsequent near amputation of his left arm. Following this injury he spent 13 months in recovery at Stanton General Hospital in Washington D. C. Of significant note to the 1865 diary is a first hand account of Abraham Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theatre. Nightingale was released from the hospital on June 2nd, 1865, and he married on July 6th, 1865. Two letters from Nightingale to Gertrude Taylor, a pen pal during the time of Nightingale's stay at Stanton, are available from the Falvey Memorial Library's Nagy collection at Villanova University.

Biography

Henry Oliver Nightingale was born in Hawkhurst, County Kent, England on June 6, 1844. He emigrated to the United States in 1849, arriving in New York from London aboard the Margaret Evans on June 30th at the age of 5. His parents, Henry and Hannah, himself, and younger brother Charles settled in Rochester, New York.

Henry was an abolitionist, and joined the northern army when the Civil War broke out at the age of 18. He mustered in July 8, 1862 as a private in the 108th Volunteer New York Infantry. He fought in a dozen battles, including Gettysburg, and was promoted to corporal on March 1, 1864. On May 6, 1864, during the Battle of the Wilderness in Virginia, Henry was hit by a Confederate gunshot in the left shoulder.

He was sent to Stanton General Hospital in Washington, DC for treatment of his wound. The injury was serious, and the attending surgeon wanted to amputate his arm. Henry refused to allow that, and remained a patient at Stanton for 13 months. Throughout his life, Henry suffered with weakness and numbness in his left arm.

Henry was released from the hospital and honorably discharged from service on June 2, 1865. He returned to Rochester, and married Judith Underdown, also an immigrant from England, a month later on July 6th, 1865. Henry worked as a bookkeeper and printer, and he and Judith had several children. Three of the children died in infancy, one died as a young man, and three lived full lives: twins John and Florence, and Edith.

They moved around the country, living in New York, Buffalo, Detroit, and Spokane. Judith died while they lived in Spokane, on December 30, 1907. A few years later, Henry moved to Oregon to be near his daughter Edith, and then returned to Detroit, where he died on May 12, 1919 at the age of 76. His body was returned to Spokane and buried on May 20.

(Cited from: Nagy, Steve. "The Civil War Writings of Henry Nightingale." 2010, p. 5.)

Publication Rights

Publication rights to Henry O. Nightingale diaries are held by Marilyn Denio.

Access

Digital collection is open for research

Use

The digital collection is open for research use. Access to the physical diaries is restricted; consult the repository for details.

Existence and Location of Originals

Original diaries owned by Marilyn Denio. Diaries were loaned to the UC Merced Library for digitization.

Related Archival Materials

Two letters from Nightingale to Gertrude Taylor, a pen pal during the time of Nightingale's stay at Stanton Hospital, are available from the Falvey Memorial Library's Nagy collection at Villanova University, <http://digital.library.villanova.edu/Americana/Nagy/>.

Henry O. Nightingale diary, 1864 1864

Physical Description: 1 digital objects

Henry O. Nightingale diary, 1865 1865

Physical Description: 1 digital objects

Henry O. Nightingale, portrait probably 18640726

Physical Description: 1 digital objects