

C Bishop, William (1817-1879), Papers, 1839-1891
3894 .4 linear feet

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INTRODUCTION

Papers of a commander of a Union cavalry unit in northeast Missouri during the Civil War, and State Treasurer of Missouri following the war. The papers consist of personal and military correspondence and miscellaneous documents, and State Treasurer records.

DONOR INFORMATION

The William Bishop Papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Clayton P. Bishop, Jr. on December 6, 1991 (SHS Accession No. 2865). An addition to the papers was made by Mr. Bishop on 27 September 1996 (SHS Accession No. 3119)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Bishop was born in Martinsburg, Virginia, in 1817. By 1846 he had settled in Clark County, Missouri. Active in the Republican Party, Bishop was a presidential elector for Abraham Lincoln in 1860, and attended the Presidential inauguration.

A staunch Union supporter, he organized numerous Home Guard regiments in northeast Missouri during the months of June and July 1861. All units of what were to become the 1st and 2nd Regiments, Northeast Missouri Home Guards, were recruited by Bishop or his deputies.

In July 1861 Bishop was authorized to recruit and command a battalion of cavalry in northeast Missouri. Colonel Bishop chose Warsaw, Illinois, as the recruiting and training camp for his unit, which was designated the Black Hawk Battalion. The unit was then posted to Hudson City (now called Martinsburg), Missouri, where it was in position to protect the North Missouri and Hannibal, and St. Joseph Railroads.

Plagued by supply and other administrative difficulties, political intrigue within the battalion, and conflict with state authorities, Colonel Bishop was brought before a court martial in February 1862, and charged with falsifying a muster roll, neglect of duty, conduct unbecoming an officer, and incompetency. He pleaded not guilty to all the charges, and though acquitted, lost command of the battalion. The unit was eventually incorporated into the 7th Missouri Cavalry. Bishop resigned his commission and was mustered out of service in April 1862.

Undeterred, Colonel Bishop gathered support and documentation and traveled to Washington, D.C. in the spring of 1862 hoping to revive his career with a new command or political appointment. Failing to procure either, he opened a business in his hometown of Alexandria, Missouri. He was later appointed Port Surveyor and Provost Marshall before he was elected State Treasurer in 1864.

William Bishop was married to Mary Ann Lapsley and had six children. He is buried in Kahoka, Missouri.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Bishop Papers document the personal and professional life of a prominent citizen of Clark County, Missouri, and to a lesser extent his family, during the Civil War and shortly thereafter. The collection consists of three series: **Personal**, **Military**, and **State Treasurer**.

The steady correspondence of 1861 and 1862 between Colonel Bishop and his wife Mary, beginning just prior to the war and continuing through his difficulties commanding the Black Hawk Battalion, a Union cavalry unit stationed in Audrain County, comprise the bulk of the **Personal** series. The letters record Colonel Bishop ambitiously seeking a political appointment at the Lincoln inaugural, William and Mary's uncertainties at the beginning of the war, the routine of camp life, regimental intrigue and William's growing frustration with the military, and his attempts to rehabilitate his career. Mary, in Warsaw, Illinois, was coping with a pregnancy, family problems, and the pain of separation, while at the same time commiserating with and encouraging her husband. The letters especially illuminate William and Mary's relationship under trying circumstances, with more limited coverage of William's military activities. Several letters from other family members are also included.

In the fall of 1864, Colonel Bishop was elected State Treasurer. In the exchange of letters with Mary continuing into 1865, William discusses beginning his work as Treasurer, and their plans to establish a home in Jefferson City.

Bishop kept in contact with Governor Thomas C. Fletcher, in whose administration he had served, and in several 1870s letters Fletcher relates personal news and political views.

Some ancillary materials in the personal series include William's very brief diary kept during his court martial in February 1862, William's will, land records for land in Virginia and northeast Missouri counties, and miscellaneous legal documents. Assorted records concerning the activities and genealogy of William Bishop and the Bishop family complete the series.

Fragmentary correspondence of the Black Hawk Battalion, in the form of letters, telegraphs, and orders, to and from various levels of command, make up the bulk of the **Military** series. These records partially document the administrative history of the unit prior to its inclusion in the 7th Missouri Cavalry: Bishop's initial authority to raise a regiment; difficulties in securing supplies and pay; routine orders and administrative activities; a beleaguered Colonel Bishop, in conflict with state authorities, threatening to resign; and his appearance before a court martial.

The series also contains detailed reports of a December 1861, skirmish with Confederate troops at Crabapple Grove, near Sturgeon in Boone County, the 1861 muster-in rolls of northeast Missouri Home Guard units and the Black Hawk Battalion, and Colonel Bishop's commission, discharge, and other service papers.

A small **State Treasurer** series containing miscellaneous papers pertaining to Bishop's administration of that office, 1865-1869, completes the collection.

FOLDER LIST

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- f. 2 Correspondence, 1861 July
- f. 3 Correspondence, 1861 October-December
- f. 4 Correspondence, 1862 January
- f. 5 Correspondence, 1862 February
- f. 6 Correspondence, 1862 March
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- f. 13 Diary, 1862
- f. 14 Will, William Bishop, 1879
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- f. 17 Legal documents, 1844-1847
- f. 18 Miscellaneous, William Bishop
- f. 19 Miscellaneous, Bishop family

Military Series

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- f. 21 Correspondence, 1861 October
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