

**The Filson Historical Society**

**Howe, Ebenezer B., 1815-1874  
Journal, 1846-1847**

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Size of Collection:  
0.33 cubic feet

Location Number:  
Mss. A H855

**Howe, Ebenezer B., 1815-1874  
Journal, 1846-1847**

**Scope and Content Note**

Journal of the Louisville Light Artillery, Company C of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Kentucky Volunteers (also called the Louisville Legion). Under Captain Ebenezer B. Howe, the Louisville Light Artillery was a volunteer unit which served in the Mexican War from May 1846 to May 1847. The journal contains a record of the company's movements in northern Mexico; a description of the land, towns, and interactions with the Mexican citizenry; and a record of military engagements between the Americans and the Mexican army.

The Louisville Light Artillery served during the Battle of Monterrey of 21-24 September 1846, although the unit was removed from the primary fighting. Subsequently stationed at Monterrey, Company C witnessed the unrest in the area following the Mexican defeat. The company guarded Monterrey during the Battle of Buena Vista of 23 February 1847, with rumors and reports of the battle reaching the city. The company was also involved in minor skirmishes guarding supply lines between Camargo and Monterrey in the early months of 1847. A transcript of the journal is available.

This collection is comprised two accessions: 009x13 and 009x54, which have been combined for the sake of clarity.

Separation Note: The Civil War correspondence of William M. Heston (Mss. C H) was separated from this collection.

### **Summary of the Ebenezer B. Howe Journal:**

The initial pages of the journal contain a list of names of the soldiers who comprise the Louisville Light Artillery, including details on each man's birthplace. The list is an excellent source detailing immigration patterns and the ethnic composition of Louisville in the mid-19th century.

18 May – 30 May 1846. The Light Artillery embarks on the Steamer Diana for New Orleans. Entries report the reception of the regiment in towns along the river, especially in Baton Rouge; as well as drownings and other shipboard accidents, including a collapsed flue on the boat, which resulted in several casualties.

31 May – 4 June 1846. The Light Artillery camps at Algiers, near New Orleans, Louisiana. The land is swampy and the weather hot. Some of the men are dissatisfied with their pay and several desert.

4 June 1846 – 10 June 1846. The Light Artillery embarks on the ship Fredonia for Brazos Island. Prior to boarding the vessel, some men under Capt. Kerns' command mutiny. Once aboard ship, entries comment on the speed of their vessel; the weather and sea sickness of some of the men; and some of the sea life they encounter during their journey.

10 June 1846 – 21 June 1846. The Light Artillery arrives at Brazos Island at the southernmost point of Texas. The men are eager to fight although they have no ammunition yet. Entries describe the camp, the food available, and the unit's drills and preparation for battle. A picket is sent out following a reported sighting of Mexicans north of the border, but returns without engaging the enemy.

22 June 1846 – 11 August 1846. The Light Artillery moves from Brazos Island to the mainland, where they march from the mouth of the Rio Grande and establish camp near the abandoned village of Boreto, Mexico. The company's time at Camp Taylor near Boreto is characterized by boredom, hot and rainy weather, spreading disease, and recurring incidents of disobedience by the restless soldiers. John H. Wilber, a suspected spy for the Mexican government, is arrested and held until his release is ordered by General Taylor. There are also complaints about the regiment's sutler, who has done a poor job of outfitting the men with the necessary supplies. Mexican civilians approach the soldiers, offering produce for sale at exorbitant prices.

12 August 1846 – 23 August 1846. The Light Artillery marches from Boreto to Matamoros and onward to Camargo. Entries describe the countryside of northern Mexico, especially noting the fertility of the land, its state of cultivation, and the livestock populating the region. The company pauses for a brief time in Matamoros and entries describe the town, especially its architecture. The Americans discover that Don Jose Maria Tova, a citizen of Matamoros, has been stockpiling arms and equipment of the Mexican army on his property. Leaving Matamoros and resuming long days of marching to Camargo, entries comment on the countryside they traverse, the fatigue of the men, and the continual quest for water. The company encounters a few Mexican civilians: one group is suspicious of the Americans and tries to misdirect them, while others become angry when the soldiers slaughter their cattle for fresh meat.

23 August 1846 – 6 September 1846. The Light Artillery camps near Camargo. An explosion aboard the steamboat Enterprise resulted in many casualties; the boat had been coming up the river from Matamoros with men unable to march. There is a description of the town of Camargo, which is falling into decay, as well as its cemetery which has an interesting monument ornamented with human skulls and bones. Entries report sickness in the camp; the deaths of soldiers, and discharge of men, most of whom are in a weakened state and cannot fight. The company prepares for the march to Monterrey, with several inspections and a delivery of ordnance and camp supplies. While at Camargo, the company also

encounters a tribe of "Crete" (Creek?) Indians, and the journal describes the physical appearance of the people, their wedding customs, and their food and housing.

6 September 1846 – 19 September 1846. Capt. Howe departs for Louisville on a 60 day furlough. The Light Artillery marches to Monterrey and entries describe the land on the march, which is becoming rockier and hillier. The company passes through the town of "Saralvo" (i.e. Cerralvo), which is briefly described, with attention given to its cathedral. There is discontentment among the muleteers. One muleteer deserts, taking his team of mules with him; the other muleteers are encouraged to continue marching at the point of the bayonet. The men encounter leaflets distributed by General Pedro de Ampudia on their route, encouraging the Americans to desert to the Mexican side. The company passes through the town of "Marian" (Marin?), which is mostly deserted; the Mexicans have abandoned their homes because of treatment by the Mexican army, especially by Ampudia, who is conscripting them for military service. The men are anxious to continue the march, believing that an engagement with the Mexicans will end the war and they will be able to return home. As they near Monterrey, a few skirmishes with Mexican soldiers are reported, with some Mexicans taken prisoner.

19 September 1846 – 16 December 1846. The Light Artillery arrives at Monterrey and prepares for battle. The Americans engage the Mexican Army in the Battle of Monterrey, 21-24 September 1846. To the men's immense disappointment, the company is ordered to remain to guard the camp on the first day of battle. A description of the battle follows, with particular attention to the role of the Louisville Legion. The Mexicans evacuate Monterrey on 25-26 September and the Legion camps outside the city, continuing to drill as it is believed the Battle of Monterrey may not prove to be decisive. While at Monterrey, the men receive their first pay for their service. On 13 November General Worth departs for Saltillo to establish a military post. In the weeks following the Battle of Monterrey, several soldiers go missing or are found murdered, presumably by the Mexicans. Some 20-30 Mexicans are found dead in the vicinity of the encampment, presumably in retribution for the Americans who were recently killed. Private John Mowry is arrested and court-martialed for shooting a Mexican; he is discharged in disgrace on 14 December by order of General Taylor.

16 December 1846 – 1 January 1847. On 16 December the Light Artillery assembles and marches in haste for Saltillo to reinforce General Worth's troops, as a large body of Mexicans is rumored to be assembling. In Saltillo, brief observations on the town's size and its cathedral are recorded. The cold weather as well as the lack of proper equipment and fuel for fires is causing illness among the troops. The men lack proper medical care; the head physician is ill at Monterrey and others are busy seeing to complaints in Saltillo. It is determined that the Mexican army does not threaten Saltillo and the company marches from town on 1 January, pausing to celebrate the New Year with excessive drinking.

1 January 1847 – 4 March 1847. The Light Artillery returns to Monterrey. On return, the company learns of the death of a fellow soldier; he and others who were ill had been left exposed to the elements for 36 hours during the hasty departure for Saltillo. The Legion occupies Monterrey, guarding Mexicans who are sent to the city as prisoners. By the end of January, rumors start to circulate of a Mexican force gathering to march on Saltillo. General Taylor departs for Saltillo with troops and Monterrey also prepares for imminent attack, with many Mexican civilians abandoning the city. By the end of February, there are reports of skirmishes near Monterrey, including a wagon train coming from Camargo that has been captured by the Mexicans. The wagon train's guard included four members of Company C who have been captured, fate unknown. The Legion receives news of the Battle of Buena Vista, which was fought on 23 February to the south of Saltillo and resulted in the defeat of the Mexicans under General Santa Anna.

5 March 1847 – 11 April 1847. The Light Artillery marches between Monterrey and Camargo, guarding wagon trains. Passing the site of the wagon train that was attacked in February, the men are disturbed to

find the unburied remains of fellow soldiers; they set fire to a Mexican ranch called Ramos in retaliation. On 7 March, the company skirmishes with Mexican lancers who attack their wagons but are repulsed by the Americans. The waggoners remain skittish after this attack, refusing to travel further without reinforcements and abandoning their mule teams at the slightest provocation. Passing through Cerralvo on their journey, the men find that the town's Alcalde is particularly solicitous to their needs, ensuring that the troops are well-fed with fresh beef.

11 April 1847 – 24 May 1847. The Light Artillery departs from Monterrey and travels home. The men are discharged in New Orleans on 16 May. The Legion arrives in Louisville on 24 May 1847.

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**Biographical Note**

Ebenezer B. Howe (1815-1874) was an officer in the Mexican War, and later fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Howe was born in 1815 in New York State. He was Captain of the Louisville Light Artillery, Company C, 1st Kentucky Volunteers (also called the Louisville Legion) during the Mexican War. His company served from May 1846 to May 1847. The Light Artillery was present at the Battle of Monterrey and performed garrison duty at Monterrey during the Battle of Buena Vista.

Howe appears in the Louisville city directories in 1841, where his occupation is listed as a gilder. He was married, presumably prior to his arrival in Louisville, as no marriage was found in the Jefferson County records. He was granted a furlough while in Mexico to return to Kentucky to see his wife. At least one child was born to this marriage, a son named William B. Howe. (Unsubstantiated information on Ancestry.com states that the name of Ebenezer Howe's wife was Susan C. Payne and that the couple had four children.)

Soon after his return from the Mexican War, Howe left Louisville for California. Howe was a known resident of California in 1852, appearing on the state census in Calaveras County. On August 28, 1854, he married Arabella Kenicott in Alameda County, California. He apparently abandoned Arabella in the late 1850s to travel to Texas or the surrounding area.

Howe fought in the Civil War for the Confederacy, enlisting in San Antonio in July, 1861. He was a sergeant in the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Battery, Texas Light Artillery (Edgar's Company), which fought in the Western theater, especially Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. During the Red River Campaign, Howe was captured at Natchitoches, Louisiana in March 1864 and exchanged in July 1864. After discharge, he married Judith Ann Stone Routon on May 22, 1867 in Natchitoches, Louisiana. They had four children: Louise, Joseph, Ann, and Lee.

Howe died in 1874. He is buried in Howe Cemetery in Red River Parish, Louisiana. His widows Arabella and Judith both applied for a pension in 1887.

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**Folder List**

Box 1

- Volume 1: Ebenezer B. Howe journal, May 1846 - May 1847
- Folder 2: Hand-drawn map of the Battle of Buena Vista, 1847
- Folder 3: Transcript of Ebenezer B. Howe journal, May 1846 - May 1847
- Folder 4: Photocopy of Ebenezer B. Howe journal, May 1846 - May 1847

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**Subject Headings**

Algiers (New Orleans, La.)  
Ampudia, Pedro de, 1805-1868.  
Arista, Mariano, 1802-1855.  
Brazos Island (Tex.)  
Buena Vista, Battle of, Mexico, 1847.  
Canales, Antonio, 1800?-1852?  
Civilians in war – Mexico.  
Hamer, Thomas Lyon, 1800-1846.  
Indians of North America.  
Louisville (Ky.) – Emigration and immigration.  
Louisville Legion.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Atrocities.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Campaigns - Mexico.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Casualties.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Desertions.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Equipment and supplies.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Maps.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Medical care.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Psychological aspects.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Public opinion.  
Mexican War, 1846-1848 – Transportation.  
Mexico – Description and travel.  
Military deserters.  
Military discipline.  
Monterrey, Battle of, Monterrey, Mexico, 1846.  
Operational rations (Military supplies)  
Ormsby, Stephen, 1803-1869.  
Psychological warfare.  
Spies.  
Steamboats.  
Taylor, Zachary, 1784-1850.  
Temperance.  
United States. Army. Kentucky Infantry Regiment, 1st. Company C (1846-1847)  
Wilber, John H.  
Worth, William Jenkins, 1794-1849.