

**The Filson Historical Society**

**United States. Army. Commissary of Subsistence  
Records, 1861-1865**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, see the Curator of Collections.

**Size of Collection:**  
4 volumes

**Location Number:**  
Mss. BG U58e

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**Scope and Content Note**

This collection is a significant archive of Union Commissary of Subsistence operations in the western theater during the Civil War. Stationed in Louisville, Kentucky, Capt. H. C. Symonds was responsible for millions of dollars of supplies for the Department of the Cumberland, the Department of the Ohio, and the Army of the Kentucky. The collection provides insight into food consumption by Union troops during the war, as well as the logistical challenges involved in supplying necessities to the soldiers. The collection consists of a register of telegrams sent and received by Symonds, January 1864 - August 1865; a register of letters received by Symonds, December 1864 - November 1865; and a ledger book containing a record of financial transactions, June 1861 - November 1865.

Volume 1 is a binder containing collected research on Capt. Henry C. Symonds and his role as Commissary of Subsistence. Included is biographical information on Symonds, as well as excerpts from his book *Report of a Commissary of Subsistence, 1861-1865*. Also included are copies of official correspondence published in *War of the Rebellion* concerning Symonds and the Commissary Department in Louisville. Excerpts from *War of the Rebellion* especially concern an investigation into Symonds' failure to adequately supply troops in Nashville in the summer of 1862. Also included is biographical information on Dr. Mary Walker -- Civil War surgeon, POW, and Medal of Honor recipient.

Volume 2 is a journal labeled "Telegrams", containing copies of telegrams sent and received by Symonds from 12 January 1864 to 31 August 1865. Telegrams concern prices and the purchase of foodstuffs; correspondence with companies contracted to supply various products; logistics regarding the shipment of rations; requests for funds from Washington, D.C. or other commissaries; and correspondence with military authorities, including Stephen G. Burbridge, the "Butcher of Kentucky". From 1864-1865, Symonds primarily sent supplies to Nashville, Tennessee, and Eastport, Mississippi. He was also involved in supplying Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's troops. Of particular interest are several telegrams sent to Col. A. Beckwith, Sherman's commissary officer, regarding supplies for Sherman's troops during the Atlanta Campaign in 1864. Commissaries of subsistence in other cities are frequent correspondents, including commissaries in Cincinnati, St. Louis, Nashville, Chicago, Evansville and Madison, Indiana, Washington, D.C., and Eastport, Mississippi.

Volume 3 is a journal labeled "Endorsements on Letters" and contains a register of letters received by Symonds from 9 December 1864 to 26 November 1865. Letters concern personnel issues, including resignations, reassignments, and promotions; as well as the settlement of bills and accounts with suppliers and service providers. Several letters concern poor quality foodstuffs received from suppliers; others regard questions about regulations for the issue of rations, including to the families of African American soldiers. There is also a significant

amount of correspondence with hospital administrators, including Surgeon R. Gilbert, superintendent and medical director of the hospitals in Louisville; these letters concern supplies and rations for the hospitals, as well as financial matters. Another frequent correspondent is Capt. Samuel T. Cushing, director of the Commissary's bakery operations in Jeffersonville, Indiana. As the war draws to a close, a flurry of correspondence concerns inventory and inspections reports, and arrangements for the disposition of supplies.

Volume 4 is a ledger book: "Cash Account of Capt. H. C. Symonds, C.S., U.S. Army." It contains entries from June 1861 through November 1865, and is filled with meticulous entries pertaining to orders of rations for troops. The ledger lists companies and individuals involved in transactions, including the amounts paid for stores, property, and services provided.

Related Collections:

United States. Army. Commissary of Subsistence. Records, 1861-1865. 4 vols. (Mss. BG U58a)

Symonds, H. C. (Henry Clay), d. 1900. Papers, 1861-1865. (Mss. C S)

See also:

Symonds, H. C. *Report of a Commissary of Subsistence, 1861-1865*. (Sing Sing, NY: The author, 1888). Available on Internet Archive ([www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org))

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**Historical Note**

The Commissary Department was responsible for supplying foodstuffs to all soldiers. During the Civil War, Capt. H. C. Symonds (1832-1900) was the chief of the Union Army's Commissary of Subsistence in Louisville, Kentucky. Symonds was responsible for the logistics and supply chain that transported rations to the Union Army.

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**Folder List**

Wrapped Volumes

Volume 1: Collected research on H. C. Symonds

Volume 2: Telegrams, 12 January 1864 to 31 August 1865

Volume 3: Endorsements on letters, 9 December 1864 to 26 November 1865

Volume 4: Ledger, "Cash Account of Capt. H. C. Symonds, C.S., U.S. Army", June 1861 to November 1865.

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**Subject Headings**

African American soldiers.  
Atlanta Campaign, 1864.  
Bakeries – Indiana.  
Burbridge, Stephen G. (Stephen Gano), 1831-1894.  
Camp Nelson (Ky.)  
Cattle trade – Ohio River Valley.  
Commerce – Ohio River Valley.  
Crime and criminals.  
Cushing, Samuel T.  
Female Military Prison (Louisville, Ky.)  
Gilbert, R.  
Louisville (Ky.) – History – Civil War, 1861-1865.  
Jeffersonville (Ind.) – History – Civil War, 1861-1865.  
Kentucky – History – Civil War, 1861-1865.  
Mississippi – History – Civil War, 1861-1865.  
Operational rations (Military supplies)  
Pork industry and trade – Ohio River Valley.  
Sherman, William T. (William Tecumseh), 1820-1891.  
Smith, Green Clay, 1826-1895.  
Soldiers' Rest (Louisville, Ky.)  
Symonds, H. C. (Henry Clay), d. 1900.  
United States. Army of Kentucky.  
United States. Army – Commissariat – History – 19th century.  
United States. Army. Department of the Cumberland.  
United States. Army. Department of the Ohio.  
United States. Army. Supplies and stores.  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – African Americans.  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Equipment and supplies.  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Food supply.  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Hospitals.  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Prisoners and prisons.  
Walker, Mary Edwards, 1832-1919.