



State of Tennessee
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403 Seventh Avenue North
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

JAMES C. MATES (1837-1898)
DIARIES, 1863-1865

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

These two small Civil War era diaries were penned by James Clubine Mates (born December 23, 1837, and died September 23, 1898) of the 101st Regiment of the Pennsylvania Infantry, USA, Company A. James Mates was 24 when he enrolled in the Federal Army in Pittsburgh in August 1862 and was mustered into service on September 11, 1862. Mates had been working as a farmer in Alleghany County, Pennsylvania.

Mates was captured in Plymouth, North Carolina, on April 20, 1864, after the four-day siege of Plymouth. The city, which had been occupied by Federal forces since 1862, was defended by approximately 3,000 Federal troops under Brigadier General Henry Wessells as well as sailors from Charles Flusser's US Navy squadron. The capture of Plymouth was aided by the arrival of the ironclad *CSS Albemarle* on April 19, which rammed and sank the *USS Southfield*. There were more than 2,000 casualties during the siege of Plymouth. The Union men who were captured during the battle were later referred to as "Plymouth Pilgrims."

After Mates was taken prisoner, he marched from Plymouth to Williamston, Hamilton, and then to Tarboro, North Carolina, where he boarded a southbound train in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. The train line, which was a part of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, was known as the "lifeline of the Confederacy" that supplied General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Mates passed through Goldsboro and soon reached Wilmington, North Carolina. He noted that he crossed Cape Fear in a jersey boat and arrived in Charleston, South Carolina. After passing through Savannah via train, he reached Macon, Georgia.

From May 3, 1864, to September 8, 1864, Mates was interned at the infamous Confederate prison in Andersonville, Georgia, also known as Camp Sumter. The prison was in operation for fourteen months, from February 1864 to May 1865. During this time, 45,000 soldiers were imprisoned, of whom 13,000 died of starvation or disease. Mates chiefly wrote about the weather, his rations, and the constant influx of new prisoners. However, he makes note of several events, including an execution of Yankees for "the black crime of murder" on July 11, 1864, and the arrival of some of Sherman's men at the prison on May 20, 1864. Largely as a consequence of Sherman's march southward, Mates (and many other able-bodied prisoners) were forced to leave Andersonville in September 1864 and were taken to other Confederate prison camps. Mates departed from Camp Sumter on September 8, 1864, and left Macon the following day, heading towards Savannah and then Charleston. He arrived in Camp Florence (another Confederate prison camp) on October 6, 1864, and in the following weeks wrote frequently of paroles and prisoner exchanges.

In early 1865 the Union prisoners began to receive marching orders to leave the prison camp. Mates observed on a number of occasions that the sick and wounded were being moved from the camp. It is not exactly clear when Mates was released from prison, but in late February he wrote that he left Camp Florence and boarded a train. He eventually reached the Cape Fear River. There, on March 3, he boarded an escort and arrived a few days later at Fortress Monroe, which was located on the tip of the Virginia Peninsula by the Chesapeake Bay in Hampton, Virginia. He was furloughed on March 13 and arrived home on March 14, 1865. The diary's last entry was on this date.

Mates was mustered out of service on June 25, 1865, in New Bern, North Carolina, but not before recovering from an illness which rendered him temporarily unable to travel, according to a military document signed and dated by a physician on April 10, 1865. The 1880 census reported that he was married to Elizabeth Mates and fathered three daughters and two sons. Mates worked for the railroad in Wilkins, Pennsylvania, in Alleghany County.

The Mates diaries were provided to TSLA for microfilming during the *Looking Back: The Civil War in Tennessee* project in 2010. Parts of the diaries, especially those portions written in pencil, are faded and challenging (if not impossible) to decipher. The leather-bound diary is easier to read because most of it was written in pen. However, it should be noted that parts of the diaries overlap chronologically; it is unclear as to why Mates would write in two separate diaries on the same days. Overlapping entries appear to exist from April to August 1864.

CONTENTS

Folder 1: Supplementary Material

- a. Service Records provided by the donor & accompanying research materials

Folder 2: Unbound Diary (difficult to read, largely faded, mostly in pencil)

- a. List of items (clothes) (?)
- b. diary entries from around Aug. 3, 1863 – to around July/August 1864 (?) [Mates noted that he received a letter from his brother George (August 3, 1863); wrote a letter to his brother John (June 12, 1863); wrote a letter to Robert Miller (June 29, 1863); received a letter from his sister (September 1, 1863); wrote a letter to J. Cook (September 22, 1863); and received a letter from John Cook (October 23, 1863). He also noted the date of capture (April 20, 1864) in Plymouth, North Carolina: Wessells' Brigade surrendered to Confederate General Robert F. Hoke and left Plymouth the same day.]

Folder 3: Leather-Bound Diary

- a. April 17, 1864 to Dec. 31, 1864 (mostly in pen, text begins at the middle of the book)
- b. Jan. 1, 1865 to March 14, 1865 (in pencil, text begins at the first few pages of the book)
- c. Financial transactions (in pencil)
- d. List of deceased men known to Mates who died while in prison (in pen)