



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives

Adam J. Himmel Civil War Letters, 1861-1865

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:

Himmel, Adam, 1841-1866

Inclusive Dates:

1861-1865, bulk 1863-1864

Scope & Content:

The Adam J. Himmel Civil War Letters, 1861-1865, were written by a German-born member of the 85th Illinois Infantry, Company K, during the Civil War. Himmel was mustered into service in Peoria, Illinois, on August 27, 1862. The letters in this collection, passed through the family to Himmel's great great-nephew, are all written to his brother George, who was a preacher. A religious man, Adam Himmel wrote frequently about his faith as well as his unshakable belief in the war.

The collection is arranged chronologically and is comprised of letters that reveal the reflections of a young man who believed entirely in the importance of preserving the Union. (Only two letters in the collection were penned by other family members). The collection also includes transcriptions of each letter that were completed by the donor.

Himmel bemoans the evils of slavery, writing on June 7, 1863, that the "Sins of our Nation has brought all this. Since I am Down here, I witnessed Several [sic] instances of Crime of the Grant [sic] evil, Slavery. Near our last Camp. at Hosp. ther [sic] lived an old S.C. he once whipt [sic] his Slave one Sunday, and that with a chain, that Some of our Regt 85 heard it. He put his foot on the Slave mouth that he could not hallow out, but we heard the Sashes [sic] he put in on the Darkey." (Box 1, Folder 4).

Himmel was present during a number of important military campaigns during the Civil War. He spends a period of time in Nashville, at which point (July 23, 1863)

he refers to Fort Negley as a “Magnificent [sic] Fort.” He describes it as “the Strangest and the Extraordinary of all Forts which are Build [sic] during this War & C it possesses [sic] very heavy Guns, Siege-Guns from 10-12’ long.” During a march through Williamson and Maury Counties, he describes the countryside as looking desolate, with numerous deserted houses. Later, in October 1863, he and his fellow soldiers camp on the northern bank of the Tennessee River in order to prevent the Confederate forces from crossing.

In an undated letter, which was likely written in May 1864, Himmel discusses in significant detail the capture of Rome, Georgia. There, the Federal troops crossed the Etowah River, formed a skirmish line, and drove off the Rebel forces. On November 23, 1864, he mentions an important expedition led by General William Tecumseh Sherman. As a member of the 85th Illinois Infantry, Himmel takes part in Sherman’s Atlanta Campaign. Beginning in mid-1864, Sherman initiated a series of battles in order to repel troops led by Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston and later, by John Bell Hood. In early 1865 Himmel indicates that some of his fellow soldiers are headed to Savannah, Georgia, but he does not join them because of important duties required of him along the railroads.

Himmel’s religious denomination is unclear, but he occasionally attends the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. On another occasion, however, he mentions going to services at the Methodist Church. On September 20, 1864, he writes, “It is also my earnest desire to be a good Soldier both for God & our Country, Through Him I will always try to live a Christian, even among the hosts of the Wicked & Ungodly. For, A Person can in the Army See the great difference of the 2 classes of men. Indeed there are Some very profane men in the Army, But Still, there are Some good Christians which try by all oppositions to Serve the Lord their God.” (Box 1, Folder 10).

At times, Himmel is resigned to the fact that the war may not end as soon as he had hoped. He writes, in an undated letter, “I don’t think that Peace is Soon made yet by the looks of things. But I cant tell you know. It may come [sic] unexpected. As long as I ceep [sic] so well. I want to do my part in it to Save the Union--. times look Somwhat [sic] misterius [sic] in the North. if them Copperheads would come Down here to us the [sic] could go to fighting Soon enough, for I think the [sic] ought to keep Silent up North, for the [sic] dont know much of the Sistem [sic] of War – or what it is to cari [sic] on war—I believe if Some of them would be in a good hard battle they would hush of Symphithiesing [sic] the Southern Confederacy...” (Box 1, Folder 14).

Physical Description/Extent:

1 Microfilm Reel

Accession/Record Group Number:

Microfilm accession number 1980

Language:

English

Permanent Location:

Microfilm accession number 1980

Repository:

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243-0312

Administrative/Biographical History

Adam J. Himmel (1841-1866) was born in Baden, Germany, but later immigrated to the United States around 1848, where he worked as a farmer with his family in Illinois. He was the son of Adam Himmel (1803-1882) and Anna Maria Weiss Himmel (1804-1866). Himmel was mustered into the Union Army in Peoria, Illinois, on August 27, 1862, and mustered out as sergeant in Washington, D.C., on June 5, 1865. His records describe him as light-skinned, with blue eyes and brown hair, and 5'9" tall. He served in the 85th Illinois Infantry, Company K. He is buried in Zion Cemetery in Mason County in Illinois.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

The letters are arranged chronologically.

Conditions of Access and Use**Restrictions on Access:**

None

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:

None

Index Terms**Personal Names:**

Himmel, Adam J., 1841-1866

Corporate Names/Organizations/Government Bodies:

United States. Army. Illinois Infantry Regiment, 85th

Subjects:

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

Geographic Names:

Atlanta (Ga.)
Marietta (Ga.)
DuPage County (Ill.)
Chattanooga (Tenn.)
Cleveland (Tenn.)
Columbia (Tenn.)
Knoxville (Tenn.)
Nashville (Tenn.)

Document Types:

Correspondence

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition:

The papers were loaned for microfilming by Kenneth D. Himmel on March 9, 2011, during the *Looking Back: The Civil War in Tennessee* digitization project. Adam J. Himmel is Kenneth D. Himmel's great great-uncle. Kenneth Himmel acquired the letters from his family more than fifty years ago, when he was a teenager.

Processing and Administrative Information

Preferred Citation:

Himmel, Adam J. Civil War Letters, 1861-1865, Tennessee State Library and Archives

Processing Information:

Processing completed by Gwynn Thayer on April 26, 2011

Existence and Location of Originals:

Owned by donor.

Related Archival Materials:

None

DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Box	Folder
Data on Adam J. Himmel	-	1	1
Note in German RE: Rev. John Himmel (?)	ca. 1861?	1	2
Letter to Mr. G. Himmel (Nashville, Tenn.)	3/21/1863	1	3
Letter to Mr. G. Himmel (Nashville, Tenn.)	6/7/1863	1	4
Letter to Mr. G. Himmel (Nashville, Tenn.)	7/23/1863	1	5
Letter to "Brother George" (Columbia, Tenn.)	8/29/1863	1	6
Letter to George (Chattanooga, Tenn.)	10/4/1863	1	7
Letter to George (near Marietta, Ga.)	6/12/1864	1	8
Letter from Himmel family (DuPage Co., Ill.)	8/4/1864	1	9
Letter to George (Atlanta, Ga.)	9/20/1864	1	10
Letter to George (Knoxville, Tenn.)	11/23/1864	1	11
Letter to George (Cleveland, Tenn.)	1/26/1865	1	12
Letter to George (Rome, Ga.)	no date; ca. May 1864?	1	13
Letter to George	no date	1	14
Letter to George	no date	1	15
Letter to George	no date; ca. 1863?	1	16