

Robert C. Towles Diary

Robert C. Towles Papers

1863-1864



WILLIAM
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CHARTERED 1693

Title Statement

Robert C. Towles DiaryGuide to the Robert C. Towles Diary Mss. MsV D28

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Descriptive Summary

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Unit ID

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Unit Date

1863-1864

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Extent

1.00 Linear Feet

Extent

46 p.

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Processing Information

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Biographical / Historical

Robert C. Towles was born September 6, 1843. He enlisted in Co. A, 4th Cavalry and was detached as a scout for Confederate General J. E. B. Stuart from May to June 1863. He was captured August 3, 1863, but escaped from Old Capitol Prison. He was mortally wounded at Louisa Courthouse around June 13, 1864.

Scope and Contents

Collection consists of a typescript of the diary of Sgt. Robert C. Towles, Company A, 4th Virginia Cavalry, Confederate Army, from August 5, 1863-June 20, 1864. It was kept while Towles was a prisoner of the Union Army in Warrenton, Virginia and Washington, D.C. The diary also details his escape from Carroll Prison, an annex to the Old Capitol Prison, in Washington D.C.

The collection also includes a typed copy of his furlough, dated November 14, 1863, which was signed by Confederate General J. E. B. Stuart. There is also undated correspondence from Towles' father John and mother Sophronia that inform Towles of the deaths of his brothers John H. Towles (d. May 9, 1864) and John Vivian Towles. John Vivian Towles' eulogy, written by a "Comrade" for a "Richmond paper," is also included. Robert C. Towles' wounding and death is described in correspondence to "Mrs. Towles" from Sallie Y. Conner dated 13 June 1864, and Mrs. Towles' nephew "Jno Wm" dated 16 June 16, 1864. The three Towles brothers were interred at Oakland Cemetery in Louisa County, Virginia.

Related Materials

These typescript copies could not be compared to the original diary for veracity. According to a handwritten note attached to the copies, they were made from the original "loaned by James Wharton of Weems, Virginia." Weems was a regional historian.

This diary typescript does not track with the version reprinted in Keith Kehlbeck's 2013 book, *Gone to God: A*

Civil War Family's Ultimate Sacrifice. Kehlbeck states that Towles' mother Sophronia made "several handwritten copies of Robert's diary ... for each surviving sibling. The original diary survives, as do three copies in [her] handwriting." Kehlbeck notes Sophronia Towles edited out "a few of the more exuberant escapades..." (192). Per Kehlbeck's Acknowledgements, he obtained an "original transcription" of the diary at auction.

Keywords

Diaries

Typescripts

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

Confederate States of America. Army. Virginia Cavalry Regiment, 4th

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

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Prisoners and prisons

Prince William County (Va.)--History

Lancaster County (Va.)--History

Death--United States--History--19th century

Description of Subordinate Components

Papers

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/256813

Unit Date 1863-1864

Mixed Materials MsV Box 146 (Box)

Container 1 (Folder)

Scope and Contents

Materials include Towles' diary, correspondence from and concerning him, as well as a eulogy for his brother John Vivian Towles.