



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Charles E. Pierce cash book and letter

1853-1879

MssCol 24251

Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2017

Summary

Creator: Pierce, Charles E. (Charles Edgar), 1842-1907

Title: Charles E. Pierce cash book and letter

Date: 1853-1879

Size: .23 linear feet (1 volume, 1 folder)

Source: Purchased from Swann Auction Galleries, 2017

Abstract: Charles E. Pierce (1842-1907), a farmer from Oneida County, New York, served as a private in Company I of the 146th New York Infantry from 1862 to 1865 during the American Civil War. The Charles E. Pierce cash book, 1853-1879, contains a narrative of his capture at the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864 and imprisonment at Andersonville, Georgia and Florence, South Carolina; records kept at Camp Parole Hospital, most likely by W. L. Cooper and Pierce as chief ward masters, 1865; Pierce's post-war cash accounts, and his genealogical notes. The volume was previously used by the mercantile firm of Orme, Wilson & Co. of Loudon, Tennessee, and individually by its partner R. T. Wilson, 1853-1863. The volume is accompanied by a letter written by Pierce at Camp Parole to his mother, 1865 May 21; a form letter from a veterans' association dated 188-; his admission ticket to the Soldiers' Reading Room in Philadelphia, and a few clippings relating to the Civil War.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Charles E. Pierce cash book and letter, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2017

Creator History

Charles E. (Charles Edgar) Pierce (1842-1907), a farmer from Oneida County, New York, served as a private in Company I of the 146th New York Infantry from 1862 to 1865 during the American Civil War. He was born in 1842 in Floyd, New York to John W. and Catherine Fuller Pierce, and died in 1907 in nearby Holland Patent. Pierce married Sarah J. Hinman of Floyd, and they had two sons. R. T. (Richard Thornton) Wilson (1829?-1910), of Georgia, established his financial career in Loudon, Tennessee,

forming the mercantile firm of Orme, Wilson & Co. with James Chambers Orme. By early August 1863 he was a Major in the Confederate Army and Chief Commissary of Subsistence of Tennessee; he later transacted business for the Confederacy in England. After the war he founded the firm of R. T. Wilson & Co. in New York City, amassing great wealth. His children married into the Astor and Vanderbilt families.

Scope and Content Note

The Charles E. Pierce cash book, 1853-1879, contains a narrative of his capture at the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864 and imprisonment at Andersonville, Georgia and Florence, South Carolina; records kept at Camp Parole Hospital, most likely by W. L. Cooper and Pierce as chief ward masters, 1865; Pierce's post-war cash accounts, and his genealogical notes. The volume was previously used by the mercantile firm of Orme, Wilson & Co. of Loudon, Tennessee, and individually by its partner R. T. Wilson, 1853-1863.

The cash book begins with accounts for Orme, Wilson & Co. and R. T. Wilson of Loudon, Tennessee, dating 1853 February-1863 August, with related accounts for 1855 and 1858 at the end of the volume. Accounts from January 1858 forward are for R. T. Wilson as explained in his note dated 1858 January 20 (repeated at the end of the volume); these include a joint stock venture with J. C. Orme, and accounts for the estate of his deceased father, William Wilson. Cooper and Pierce wrote on half-filled and blank pages in this volume.

Pierce's narrative of his experience as a prisoner of war (14 pages), apparently compiled during his stay at Camp Parole, begins with his wounding at the battle of the Wilderness on the morning of May 5, 1864. He lay on the battlefield until May 8, when he was taken to a Confederate field hospital. He and other prisoners, including his regimental tent mate George Wheeler, were later escorted south on a grueling journey. Traveling mostly by rail cars, they rested in hospitals and prisons on their passage through Virginia. They left Danville, Virginia for Columbia, South Carolina and from there headed to Augusta and Macon, Georgia, finally arriving at Andersonville prison several weeks after their capture. Pierce describes his arrival there, and the horrific conditions he encountered. At the end of September, Pierce was among a large detachment of prisoners sent to Charleston, South Carolina, apparently for exchange. From confinement at Charleston, however, they were sent instead to a guarded field in Florence, South Carolina, a new prison camp yet to be surrounded by a stockade. Pierce describes his escape from Florence with other soldiers, their eventual recapture and return to the prison. The narrative describes conditions there but ends before his release in early 1865 from Florence Stockade.

The narrative is preceded by lists of duty men at Camp Parole Hospital; Pierce's undated personal cash accounts and copied invoices dated 1866 and 1868 at Holland Patent; and The History of the Bell & Trap, a brief account of a bell and animal trap owned by the Pierces, with a biographical note about his grandfather Simeon Fuller. It is followed by lineage notes on his Fuller and Pierce families; a Morning Report of Beds in Camp Parole Hospital, May 24, 1865; and Pierce's cash accounts for 1871, including some for his wife. An 1879 entry is in another hand. There are numerous pen trials and some copying of Wilson's entries.

Signatures of W. L. Cooper and C. E. Pierce as Chief Ward Masters at Camp Parole Hospital appear in the front of the volume. A patriotic statement of ownership, following Wilson's 1863 May 4 entry, remarks that the volume in Cooper's possession was "recently taken from the City that cradled the Rebellion." The statement, written in the third person, appears to be in Cooper's handwriting. There are a few names and addresses of other soldiers. An undated note at end, by Surgeon in Chief M. B. Stewart at Camp Parole Hospital, states that C. E. Pierce is now available for other duty. A check dated March 22, 1865 for a Wilmington, North Carolina bank is pasted inside the front cover.

The volume is accompanied by a letter written by Pierce at Camp Parole to his mother, 1865 May 21, describing his activities as a clerk and his intention to write the story of his imprisonment while at camp; a form letter from a veterans' association for ex-prisoners of war dated 188-; an admission ticket to the Soldiers' Reading Room in Philadelphia for C. E. Pierce, Episcopal Hospital, and a few clippings relating to the Civil War.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Account books
Memoirs

Geographic Names

Camp Parole (Md.)
Oneida County (N.Y.) -- Genealogy
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Personal narratives
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Prisoners and prisons

Occupations

Farmers
Merchants
Soldiers

Subjects

Merchants -- Tennessee -- Loudon -- 19th century
Wilderness, Battle of the, Va., 1864

Names

Wilson, R. T. (Richard Thornton), 1829?-1910
Andersonville Prison
Florence Prison (S.C.)
Orme, Wilson & Co.
United States. Army. New York Infantry Regiment, 146th