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Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**United States Sanitary Commission records. Department of the Shenandoah archives**

1864-1865

MssCol 18591

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Compiled by Melissa Haley, 2013

## Summary

**Creator:** United States Sanitary Commission

**Title:** United States Sanitary Commission records. Department of the Shenandoah archives

**Date:** 1864-1865

**Size:** .92 linear feet (2 boxes, 1 volume)

**Source:** Donated by the United States Sanitary Commission to the Astor Library, 1879

**Abstract:** The USSC's Department of Shenandoah (also referred to as the Department of West Virginia) was based at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia from spring 1864 through June 1865 under the direction of Superintendent George A. Mühleck, closing its affairs in July under C. F. Howes. The Department of the Shenandoah Archives, 1864-1865, consist of letters, telegrams, reports from relief agents in the field, departmental orders, hospital reports, stock inventories, financial records, and a register of documents, as well as record books from its agencies in Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg, and Winchester. The records document the Department's efforts to support Union troops through the distribution of supplies and other forms of relief, particularly during the Shenandoah Valley campaigns of 1864.

**Preferred citation:** United States Sanitary Commission records. Department of the Shenandoah archives, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

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## Creator History

The USSC's Department of the Shenandoah (also referred to as the Department of West Virginia), was based at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia from spring 1864–June 1865, and primarily provided supplies for soldiers involved in the Shenandoah Valley campaigns of 1864.

The USSC established an agency at Harpers Ferry in early 1864 but it was only sporadically active at first, under the direction of Colonel August Poten. In May, Union Army activities increased in the area, and Dr. Lewis H. Steiner appointed Colonel George A. (George Adolph) Mühleck (d. 1869), former

Union colonel (73rd Pennsylvania Infantry) and USSC relief agent for the Army of the Potomac, to head up the new department as superintendent. The colonel was acquainted with Major General Franz Sigel, currently commanding the Union Army's Department of West Virginia, having served with him earlier in the war. Mühleck relieved Acting Superintendent Charles C. Harris when he took charge at Harpers Ferry in May.

The Department's scope was limited to the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia and West Virginia, and Maryland between Cumberland and Frederick, and was considered to be connected to operations in the East. Occasionally troop movements necessitated sending supplies into territory typically under the purview of the USSC's Western Department, whose West Virginia operations were based in Wheeling.

Mühleck established an agency at Martinsburg, West Virginia, and the Department began issuing supplies from there and the main agency in Harpers Ferry. Several battles and skirmishes occurred in the area in June and July as Major General David Hunter, now in command of Union forces, attempted to destroy Confederate crops, livestock and transportation. The USSC distributed supplies to many hospitals in the Shenandoah Valley and Maryland including to those at Frederick, Hagerstown, Pleasant Valley, Weaverton, Sandy Hook, Bolivar, Martinsburg, and Cumberland. It also assigned two relief agents to Hunter's main column, based at Martinsburg. In early July 1864, Confederate General Jubal Early captured Harpers Ferry and Mühleck and staff were forced to evacuate across the river to Maryland. They returned to the town on July 8. Activity in the Department greatly increased in August with the arrival of Major General Philip Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah, as it attempted to defeat General Jubal Early's forces, as well as Confederate guerrillas in the area. The USSC established a presence in the town of Winchester, Virginia following a battle near there at Opequon on September 19. The town was overwhelmed by numerous wounded, both Union and Confederate, and the Commission issued supplies from a depot within the main "Sheridan" hospital, with the assistance of the Union Ladies Association, a local organization. It established a permanent agency at Winchester following the battle of Cedar Creek on October 19, as well as a supply station at nearby Stephenson's Depot.

Supply work continued throughout the winter of 1864-1865 in the area's hospitals. The Martinsburg agency was closed in January, and the department concentrated its supply efforts at Harpers Ferry. A soldiers' lodge was opened at Stephenson's Depot in February. As the number of wounded decreased and the war ended, work in the Department of the Shenandoah contracted and some supply depots were closed during the spring. The Department began to wind up its affairs and dispose of its remaining property in June; some work continued into July. Mühleck departed in June, officially ending his service on July 1, and was replaced by C.F. Howes who completed the closing of the Department.

Although their main function was to issue supplies, the Department of the Shenandoah also performed many other tasks. USSC personnel transported thousands of pieces of mail for Union soldiers, forwarded personal effects of the deceased, marked graves (at Winchester) and assisted families in transporting bodies, provided special relief for individuals in need on a case-by-case basis, and obtained information for the Hospital Directory. Over the course of its existence, the department employed approximately 25 relief agents and more than 40 workers (including storekeepers, drivers, cooks, washerwomen, and laborers) all of whom were paid a salary. The area's terrain made relief work in the Shenandoah Valley especially challenging.

Within the USSC, the Department of Shenandoah reported to the Central Office at Washington. Mühleck originally reported to Dr. Steiner, the USSC's Chief of Inspection, but following Steiner's departure from the Commission in July 1864, he mainly corresponded with Rev. Frederick N. Knapp in the Washington Office. He was directed to report to General Secretary J. Foster Jenkins after December 1864. Relief agents in the Department reported to Mühleck, but also sent field reports directly to the Washington Office on occasion. Due to its proximity to Washington, the area was visited

by several USSC personnel, including Jenkins, Knapp, John S. Blatchford and Dr. Elisha Harris, who was active in the area's hospitals.

## Scope and Content Note

The Department of the Shenandoah Archives, 1864-1865, document the efforts of the Department, under its superintendent George A. Mühleck, to support Union troops on campaign in West Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia from 1864 to 1865 from its main base in Harpers Ferry, as well as locations at Martinsburg, Winchester and Stephenson's Depot. The Department worked primarily to distribute supplies received from USSC offices, branches and depots to military units, hospitals, and individual soldiers, and also gave supplies to civilians in need. It was particularly active in events leading up to and following the battles of Third Winchester (Opequon) and Cedar Creek in the fall of 1864. Other relief services represented include reporting on the whereabouts of soldiers and the disposition of soldiers' bodies, and mailing packages of money on soldiers' behalf.

The Department's records are arranged in two series: a set of Numbered documents, and Agency record books.

Numbered documents comprise the Department's letters, telegrams, and reports from relief agents in the field, the majority addressed to George A. Mühleck, as well as departmental orders, hospital reports, stock inventories, and financial records. Also present is a register of the numbered documents, created by the USSC's Archive Department.

Record books for the Department's agencies at Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg and Winchester are mainly volumes recording supplies issued, generally to officers, surgeons (attached to hospitals or regiments), regimental chaplains, area hospitals, individual soldiers and civilians, for individual relief (person not identified), to its own relief agents for distribution in the field, and to other agencies or depots in the Department. Issues of supplies to individual relief workers, the United States Christian Commission, and the hospital for Confederates in Union-occupied Winchester are also found in the records. A few volumes (mainly for Harpers Ferry) document supplies received from USSC offices at Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Frederick, New York and Boston, including the Woman's Central Association of Relief (WCAR) and New England Women's Auxiliary Association (NEWAA). The remaining volumes consist of cash books for the Department at Harpers Ferry and for Martinsburg, shedding light on day-to-day operations and staffing, and a record of money packages shipped by express at Winchester on behalf of soldiers.

## Container List

### I. Numbered documents 1864-1865

This series consists of documents arranged by the USSC in categories, then chronologically within (in most cases), and numbered 1-729. The numbers and brief descriptions of each document were entered into an accompanying Archives Register. Categories overlap and similar materials can be found in multiple categories.

Some original dates were misidentified by the USSC's clerk and consequently are out of chronological sequence. Dates were supplied by the clerk for most undated items. Unnumbered items found in close proximity to a related numbered item (typically letters written by the same agent, near in time) remain there. A few miscellaneous unnumbered items found within are filed separately.

Invoices of goods (#623-658) and Express receipts and requisitions (#708-729) were identified as destroyed in the 1878 arrangement. Consult the Archives Register for a complete record of these items.

- b. 1 f. 1 **Archives register circa 1865**  
Inventory of numbered documents, noting writer, place, and date of item.
- b. 1 f. 2-10 **#1-362 1864 Apr-1865 Jul**  
Includes letters, passes, telegrams, and reports regarding supplies, payments and financial matters (including bills and accounts), USSC internal matters and procedures, letters of introduction, and special relief matters such as the whereabouts of individual soldiers, the transportation of soldiers' bodies, and assistance to soldiers and civilians in need. Most items are directed to Superintendent George A. Mühleck. Correspondents include army personnel, USSC relief agents in the field, USSC personnel affiliated with the Central Office in Washington, DC (Frederick N. Knapp, William A. Hovey, J. Foster Jenkins, Lewis H. Steiner), and others. A few items are in German or French, notably a letter in German from Major General Franz Sigel to Mühleck dated March 27, 1865 (item 272). Item 246 is not present. It is actually the second page of item 289 and is now filed there.
- b. 1 f. 11-13 **#363-581 1864 May-1865 Jul**  
Telegrams mostly between Mühleck and relief agents regarding supplies, transport and travel plans. A few pertain to the whereabouts of soldiers, or soldiers' bodies, and the death of relief agent William A. Marks in January, 1865.  
**Reports and orders #582-622 1864-1865**  
Reports are chiefly letters from relief agents in the field to Mühleck, Steiner, and Knapp. Also present are lists of patients admitted to the regimental hospital of the 5th New York Artillery (items 602, 604-605) in Bolivar. Orders concern staff appointments, supplies, and tasks.
- b. 1 f. 14 **#582-594 1864 May-Jun**
- b. 2 f. 1-2 **#595-622 1864 Jul-1865 May**
- b. 2 f. 3 **#659-668 1864-1865**  
Accounts of stock in depot for Harpers Ferry and Winchester; abstracts of articles issued for Harpers Ferry.
- b. 2 f. 4 **#676-700 1864**  
Financial documents including USSC relief agent and office accounts, expenses, receipts, and a staff roster with salaries (item 690). Items 669-675, 677, 684-685, 701-707 are not present. Readers may consult the Archives Register for a complete record of these items.
- b. 2 f. 5 **Unnumbered documents, 1864 May and undated**  
Transportation pass for Mühleck and home address of S. von Forstner.

### II. Agency record books 1864 Mar-1865 Jul

Record books chiefly concern the receipt and distribution of supplies at Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg and Winchester. Records of supplies issued typically include date, recipient, type of stock and quantity. Records of supplies received typically include sender, date, types of stock, and quantity; some also include invoice or container numbers. Entries in both cases are in chronological order. Also present are cash books for Harpers Ferry and Martinsburg, and a record of express money packages sent by the USSC at Winchester. Volumes are arranged by agency location.

II. Agency record books (cont.)

**Harpers Ferry 1864 Mar-1865 Jul**

- b. 2 f. 6      **Supplies received 1864 Jun 16-1865 May 29**
- b. 2 f. 7      **Supplies issued 1864 Mar 28-1865 Apr 29**
- b. 2 f. 8      **Supplies issued 1865 May 1-Jun 9**
- b. 2 f. 9      **Supplies issued and received 1865 Jun 10-Jul 20**  
Includes a small number of shipments received from Philadelphia. Entries are in one chronological order.

**Cash books 1864 Sep-1865 Jul**

Cash accounts for the Department (including the Harpers Ferry agency accounts), kept by Superintendents George A. Mühleck and later, C.F. Howes. Disbursements include staff salaries, maintenance, field and transport expenses, and stable rent. Staff include the superintendent (in account with the USSC), relief agents, storekeepers, drivers, laborers, cooks, and washerwomen.

- b. 2 f. 10      **1864 Sep-1865 May**  
Accounts with personnel (mainly salaries), with name index; expenses 1864 Sep 30-Nov 30 (entries are chronological and include salaries).
- v. 1      **1865 Apr-Jul**  
Disbursements and receipts, including salaries.

**Martinsburg 1864 Oct-Dec**

- b. 2 f. 11      **Supplies received and forwarded 1864 Oct 1-Nov 30 (1 v.)**  
Entries chiefly consist of copies of invoices (transcriptions of packing lists) for shipments received. Supplies forwarded to Winchester are found at end of volume.
- b. 2 f. 12      **Supplies received 1864 Oct 25-Nov 30**  
Several leaves disbound from a volume. Entries fill some gaps in item above.
- b. 2 f. 13      **Supplies issued and forwarded 1864 Oct-Dec (1 v.)**  
Supply recipients include the Christian Commission; forwarded supplies are for Winchester. Also present, at the end of the volume, is a roster of USSC personnel. Entries, in their own hand, include name, home address, and usually their current location in the Department.
- b. 2 f. 14      **Cash book 1864 Oct-Dec**  
Disbursements and receipts for Martinsburg. Expenses include office supplies, transport, maintenance, some salaries or work done, board, horse expenses, and housekeeping. Several leaves disbound from a volume.

**Winchester 1864 Sep-1865 Jun**

Recipients of supplies issued at Winchester also include hospital visitors, the Confederate hospital, and the soldiers' home.

- b. 2 f. 15      **Supplies received 1864 Sep 23-1865 May 5**  
Entries are in rough chronological order, sometimes by name of wagon driver within. Includes a few entries for supplies issued.
- b. 2 f. 16      **Supplies issued 1864 Sep 21-Nov 17**
- b. 2 f. 17      **Supplies issued 1864 Nov 18-1865 Apr 24**
- b. 2 f. 18      **Supplies issued 1864 Dec-1865 Jun**  
The bulk of the volume concerns supplies issued in the field, 1865 Apr 25-Jun 29; also, individual relief 1865 Apr 7-8, and notes and tasks, 1864 Dec 27-1865 Jan 26.
- b. 2 f. 19      **Express packages sent 1864 Dec-1865 Apr**  
Record of express money packages sent on behalf of soldiers. Entries, in chronological order, include date, name, regiment, recipient, location, amount, date sent, and by whom.