

**MS-5, James F. Overholser Papers**

**Collection Number:** MS-5

**Title:** James F. Overholser Papers

**Dates:** 1861-1869 (bulk 1861-1865)

**Creator:** Overholser, James F., 1840-1922

**Summary/Abstract:** Papers include diaries and letters which recount the personal experiences of Civil War Private James F. Overholser, who served with General Sherman on his March to the Sea. Overholser enlisted with Company D, 81st Ohio Volunteer Infantry in 1862.

**Quantity/Physical Description:** 0.25 linear feet

**Language(s):** English

**Repository:**

Special Collections and Archives, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-0001, (937) 775-2092.

**Restrictions on Access:**

There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection.

**Restrictions on Use:**

Copyright restrictions may apply. Unpublished manuscripts are protected by copyright. Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder.

**Preferred Citation:**

MS-5, James F. Overholser Collection, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio

**Acquisition:** The materials in Series I and Series II were donated by Joel F. Overholser, grandson of James F. Overholser, to the Wright State University Special Collections and Archives in 1974. The letters in Series III were donated by Viola L. Gregg, a relative of the Burns family (to whom the letters were written), in 1987.

**Alternative Form Available:**

Digital images of the James F. Overholser Papers are available online in Wright State University's Campus Online Repository (CORE Scholar):

[http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/special\\_ms5/](http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/special_ms5/).

**Separated Material:**

The printed narrative *Three years with the Union Army; diary of James F. Overholser, Co. D. 81st Ohio. Or, Personal experiences of a private soldier who served with Gen. Sherman on his march to the sea*, written by James F. Overholser and printed in 1937, was included in the original 1974 donation. It has been separated from the manuscripts and can be found under Call No. E601 .O8.

**Related Material:**

An annotated transcript of the portion of James F. Overholser's diary detailing the March to the Sea with General Sherman in 1864 (Box 1, File 1, Item 1) from can be found in the Pamphlet Files under Events—Civil War. The project, entitled *The Diary of James F. Overholser, January 1 to September 2, 1864: A Union Soldier's Account of the Atlanta Campaign during the Civil War*, was undertaken by Dawne Dewey in 1979. Another transcript, covering the portion of Overholser's diary from January 28 to March 8, 1865 (from Box 1, File 2, Item 2) can be found with the finding aid at the front of Box 1. Some biographical information about Overholser can also be found in the front of Box 1.

**Publication Note:** A narrative written by James F. Overholser and based on his diaries was printed in 1937 as *Three years with the Union Army; diary of James F. Overholser, Co. D. 81st Ohio. Or, Personal experiences of a private soldier who served with Gen. Sherman on his march to the sea* (Call No. E601 .O8).

**Processing Information:**

The documents in this collection are very old and therefore very fragile! Correspondence has been encapsulated; however, the original envelopes are in the folder as well.

**Processed by:**

The collection was originally processed by a staff archivist. Revised by Lisa Rickey, March 2014.

**Arrangement:**

Arranged into 3 series:

Series I: Diaries

Series II: Manuscripts and Transcripts

Series III: Letters

**Biographical Note:**

James Francis Overholser was born in Preble County, Ohio, on his grandfather's farm on Dec. 29, 1840. Soon after, his parents moved the family to Iowa where he spent his youth until deciding to move to Eaton, Ohio in 1861. In July, 1862, Overholser joined the Union Army along with approximately twenty other men from Eaton. He served as a private in Company D of the 81<sup>st</sup> Ohio until the end of the Civil War. During his service he served with General Sherman on his March to the Sea in 1864. Sometime after the war, Overholser returned to Johnson County, Iowa, where he married Amelia Ford in 1867; they had at least 12 children. Sometime between 1870 and 1880, the family moved

to Ringgold County, Iowa. Overholser was a farmer all his life. He died in 1922 and is buried in Ringgold County, Iowa.

### **Scope and Content**

The James F. Overholser Diaries and Letters collection consists of three series. The first series is comprised of various diaries and a work account book that belonged to James Overholser. The second series contains manuscripts and transcripts written by James Overholser and a battlefield map that was drawn by him. The third series contains letters to James Overholser's family and a copy of "Just before the Battle, Mother." This collection is held in one Hollinger box and has seven file folders.

Series I: Diaries, is made up of three file folders containing a total of five diaries. The diaries include entries from January 1862 to June 1865, as well as work account notes and other financial notes dating between 1861 and 1869.

Series II: Manuscripts and Transcripts, is made up of three file folders. The first folder contains "Extracts from the Diary of a Private Soldier in the War of the Rebellion in 1861 to 1865..." which is a handwritten manuscript of James F. Overholser, and was written after the war. The second file folder in the series holds a penciled map of a battlefield along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. The exact location is not known, and the drawing was done by James F. Overholser. The third file folder in this series contains a typed transcript of the closing account of the James Overholser Civil War Manuscript.

Series III: Letters, is made up of two file folders, both of which contain letters to James "Crib" Burns and Mary Burns, of Preble County. The first folder contains 3 letters written by James F. Overholser to his Uncle "Crib" and Aunt Mary Burns, as well as a handwritten copy of "Just before the Battle, Mother," which Overholser wrote while he was in a camp near Pocatago, SC (January 25, 1865). The second folder contains 2 letters written by William A. Burns to his brother and sister-in-law James C. and Mary Burns.

### **Subject Terms:**

#### **Persons/Families**

Overholser, James F., 1840-1922

#### **Organizations/Corporate Names**

United States. Army. Ohio Infantry, 81st (1861-1865) -- Diaries

#### **Places**

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

#### **Material Types**

Diaries

Letters

## Collection Inventory

<b>Box</b>	<b>File</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Series I: Diaries</b>				<b>1861-1869</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>Diaries and Work Account Books (2 items)</b>	<b>1861-1869</b>
1	1	1	Diary Entries dated January-August 1862; also includes work account notes dated September-December 1861 and 1868-1869	1861-1862, 1868-1869
1	1	2	Diary Entries dated April-December 1863; also includes "Listing of clothing drawn the third year of enlistment beginning Sept. 1864," dated September-November 1864	1863-1864
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>Diaries (2 items)</b>	<b>1864-1866</b>
1	2	1	Diary Entries dated January-October 1864 and January 1865	1864-1865
1	2	2	Diary Entries dated January-March 1865; also includes notes in back regarding Atlanta (1864) and work account notes dated 1866	1864-1866
<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>Diary (1 item)</b>	<b>1865-1866</b>
1	3	1	Diary Entries dated March-June 1865; also includes work account and finance notes dated August 1865-September 1866	1865-1866
<b>Series II: Manuscripts and Transcripts</b>				<b>Undated</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>		Extracts from the diary of a Private Soldier in the War of the Rebellion in 1861 to 1865; manuscript of James F. Overholser	Undated
<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>		Map of a battlefield drawn by James F. Overholser	Undated
<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>		Typed transcript of closing account of James F. Overholser Civil War Manuscript	Undated

<b>Box</b>	<b>File</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Series III: Letters</b>				<b>1863-1865</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>Letters to family from James F. Overholser and a handwritten poem (4 items)</b>	<b>1864-1865</b>
1	6	1	James F. Overholser to Mary and Crib Burns from Field Hospital near (Ersueca?), Georgia	1864 May 18
1	6	2	James F. Overholser to Mary Burns from Chattahoochee River, Geo.	1864 Aug. 4
1	6	3	Handwritten copy of "Just before the Battle, Mother" composed by James F. Overholser while in camp near Pocatago Station, South Carolina	1865 Jan. 25
1	6	4	James F. Overholser to Mary and Crib Burns from Camp two miles from Raleigh, N.C.	1865 Apr. 23
<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>Letters to family from William A. Burns (2 items)</b>	<b>1863-1864</b>
1	7	1	William A. Burns to James C. & Mary Burns from Camp at Corinth, Miss.	1863 Jan. 30
1	7	2	William A. Burns to James C. & Mary Burns from Sams Mills, Tenn.	1864 Mar. 9