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R1330 Bess, Jacob, 1830-1908
Journal, 1864-1865
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PROVENANCE

James E. McGhee donated this item to the University of Missouri Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Rolla on April 27, 1998, SHSMO-RA0701.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This is a typescript of a journal by Bollinger County, Missouri native Jacob Bess during service with the 7th Missouri Cavalry (Confederate), September 26, 1864—June 22, 1865. Brief daily entries note the succession of camps in Arkansas and Louisiana, acquiring horses, and personal expenses.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jacob Bess, Jr. was born in Cape Girardeau, Missouri on January 16, 1830 [some sources indicate 1828] to Jacob Bess (1781-1870) and Barbara “Polly” Slinkard (1785-1860). In 1850, he resided in Cape Girardeau, where he married Elmira E. Bird (1834-1859). The union produced four children. In the 1860 census, Bess was enumerated in Bollinger County as a widower with four children. By 1870, Bess had married Mrs. Anna (Hahn) Tinnin (1835-1894), a widow. Six children were born to this union.

At least one of Jacob’s brothers served in the Missouri State Guard, but no military record exists for Jacob until 1864 when he enlisted in Company D of the 7th Missouri Cavalry Regiment. The company, composed largely of men from Bollinger and Stoddard counties, joined Kitchen’s Cavalry Battalion to form the regiment originally called the 10th Missouri Cavalry. The Confederate War Department later re-designated the unit as the 7th Missouri Cavalry Regiment. The regiment participated in nearly all of the engagements of Gen. John S. Marmaduke’s Cavalry Brigade in Arkansas and Missouri during 1863-64, and was part of the Confederate forces during Price’s Expedition into Missouri. The 7th guarded wagon trains at Pilot Knob and was not involved in the assault on Fort Davidson. The end of the war found the unit in Louisiana, where it was surrendered and the men paroled on June 8, 1865. The men boarded the steamboat Adams for the journey to Missouri. Bess disembarked at Cape Girardeau on June 21, 1865. “Uncle Jake,” as he was commonly called, resumed farming in Bollinger County after the war and was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church South for many years. He died February 19, 1908 and is buried in the Old Union Methodist Church Cemetery at Bessville in Bollinger County, Missouri.

Bess began his journal on Christmas Day 1864, recording his travels since he left his home for the Confederate army on September 26, 1864. His brief entries are more itinerary than journal, usually noting only the location of a camp, mileage marched, and weather conditions. He mentioned preaching in camp and matters concerning horses, but very little about camp life.

The whereabouts of Bess's original journal are not known. The typescript has been known for some time. It appears to be an accurate and authentic transcription, although the transcriber had some difficulty with Bess's irregular spelling of place names.

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PERFERRED CITATION

Jacob Bess journal, State Historical Society of Missouri

CONTACT INFORMATION

The State Historical Society of Missouri
Research Center-Rolla
G-3 Library, Missouri University of Science and Technology
400 W. 14th Street
Rolla, MO 65409-1420
(573) 341-4874

shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

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