

C Van Zandt, Gilbert, (1851-1944), Papers, 1865-1956
4163 0.4 cubic feet

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

INTRODUCTION

The papers of Gilbert Van Zandt contain personal correspondence, biographical information, newspaper clippings and photographs. Van Zandt became notorious as the youngest member of the Union Army.

DONOR INFORMATION

The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Turner Van Zandt in 1989 (Accession No. 5933).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gilbert Van Zandt, also known as “Little Gib” was the youngest soldier to serve in the Union army. Born to John and Nancy Van Zandt in 1851, Gilbert was just ten years old when recruiters came to the small village of Port William in Ohio and beckoned him to join the North’s cause as a drummer boy. Here, Gilbert was used as an advocate of the Union Army, Company D, to help persuade others to sign up. Gilbert was accompanied by his father in enlistment and stayed with him for the three years of his service. Gilbert witnessed some of the most astonishing moments of the war, including Sherman’s March to the Sea, and met some of the most daunting figures of the Civil War, including Union Major General William Tecumseh Sherman. Gilbert was the “little favorite” of Company D, and was even presented with a pony to ride when he became a dispatch carrier.

Gilbert was discharged at the age of 13, near the end of war. Knowing he would have to give the pony back, Gilbert campaigned to keep the pony to President Johnson. Johnson gave him the option to keep the pony or become an officer. Gilbert chose the former. Gilbert, his family, and the pony later moved to Xenia, Missouri, for five years. Gilbert spent the rest of his life around Kansas City, Missouri. He died there on October 4, 1944.

FOLDER LIST

- f. 1 Stories written by various authors about the life of Gilbert Van Zandt
- f. 2 Newspaper clippings regarding Gilbert Van Zandt
- f. 3 Correspondence regarding the death of his brother, John, in the Philippines
- f. 4 Personal correspondence of Gilbert Van Zandt
- f. 5 Miscellaneous papers, including funeral services, discharge papers, and photos.

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