

Information Sheet

R Johnson, Allen Bolles, ca. 1834-1864.
289 Letters, 1860-1861.
Two folders, photocopies and typescripts.

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

These are letters from Rolla and St. Louis, Missouri, by a native of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. They include descriptions of rail travel from Binghamton, New York, to Missouri, the controversy over secession at Rolla, and the Camp Jackson affair and civil unrest in St. Louis.

Allen Bolles Johnson came to Missouri in October 1860. His journey followed a bitter dispute with his father, but his motivation for relocating in Missouri is unknown. However, he had acquaintances among railroad workers in New York and Pennsylvania who had come to Missouri to build the South-West Branch of the Pacific Railroad. It might be that Johnson followed their lead when he came to the end of the tracks at Rolla. He had no difficulty securing employment as a clerk in Rolla, first at a hotel, and then at a drugstore.

The recipient of Johnson's letters was Eliza Frazier, his fiancée, also of Susquehanna County. The missives to her are essentially love letters, filled with Victorian-era moralizing and philosophical discourses. They also contain a good deal of information about the young railroad town of Rolla and its inhabitants. The letters written in the spring of 1861 comment on the division of opinion between Unionists and secessionists. A Douglas Democrat and supporter of the Union, Johnson found himself on the opposite side of prevailing opinion. By his own account, he left Rolla in disgust over the secessionists and their actions. According to the *Rolla Express*, Johnson was unceremoniously forced to leave by the local rebels. Whatever the circumstances, they seemed to have involved cultural differences as much as political disagreements. Johnson made it quite clear in his letters that he did not like the "natives" around Rolla, and it is not hard to imagine that the feeling was mutual. In his last note from Missouri, written on 16 May 1861 at St. Louis, Johnson recounted the events which led to his departure from Rolla. He also described the agitation in St. Louis over the Camp Jackson affair and the shootings of civilians by Union troops.

Johnson's letters from Missouri are part of a much larger collection held by the donor. After leaving St. Louis, Johnson joined the 39th Illinois Infantry as a sergeant. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in November 1861, and first lieutenant in December. He continued to write regularly to Eliza Frazier until February 1864, when he broke the engagement and ended their correspondence. Johnson died of yellow fever while in military service at New Bern, North Carolina, on 13 September 1864.

These letters were edited and published as "Union or Disunion: The Letters of Allen B. Johnson," *Newsletter of the Phelps County Historical Society*, VI, 3 (June 1987), 2-35.

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20 May 1986

Charles L. Perkins

Gift

Shelf List

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Folder 1: Letters, 14 October 1860 – 16 May 1861 (16 items).

Folder 2: Typescripts.

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Index Cards

Cincinnati (Ohio).
Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Rolla, Mo.).
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De Normandie, Anthony.
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Malcolm, Andrew, 1804-1878.
Missouri—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.
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Rolla (Mo.).
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