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**R1286 Sitton, John James (1842-1915).
Collection, 1860-1913.
Six volumes, two folders.
MICROFILM**

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PROVENANCE

Leonard M. Sitton and Marycarol Sitton-Deane loaned the collection for copying, SHSMO accession RA1550, on 11 December 2011.

BIOGRAPHY

Born 5 July 1842 at Webster (later Palmer) in Washington County, Missouri, John James Sitton was one of eleven children of Harvey and Martha F. (Wingo) Sitton. When Sitton began recording his life in 1860, he had rejected mining as an occupation and had determined to pursue his education at Salem Academy in Dent County, where he boarded with his uncle, Edmund T. Wingo. Sitton left school during the ferment leading up to the Civil War, but learned upon returning home that federal soldiers had the names of all southern sympathizers "including my own." He left in May 1861 to join the Missouri State Guard, but en route joined Walker's regiment of Gen. N. B. Pearce's Arkansas State brigade. "Through the influence of family on both sides," he obtained a discharge from Arkansas service on 29 July 1861 and immediately enlisted in Gen. James H. McBride's Seventh Division of the Missouri State Guard, joining the First Infantry Regiment led by his uncle, E. T. Wingo, now a colonel. Sitton became the regiment's standard bearer and carried the Missouri flag into battle at Wilson's Creek on 10 August. He participated in the action at Dry Wood and Battle of Lexington in September 1861, was present at Neosho and Cassville during meetings of the "Rebel" legislature in October, and mustered out as sergeant major at the end of his enlistment on 23 November 1861. Sitton enlisted at Springfield on 20 January 1862 in Company G of the 4th Missouri Infantry (CS), was elected second lieutenant, and later became captain of the company.

Sitton was hauled to Pea Ridge, Arkansas on wagonload of corn in March 1862. Incapacitated by illness, he did not reach his unit until after the battle. Sitton and the 4th Missouri Infantry traveled east of the Mississippi River with Gen. Van Dorn's Arkansas army in April 1862, became part of Sterling Price's corps in the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana, and were heavily engaged at the battles of Iuka and Corinth, Mississippi, in the fall of 1862. Battle casualties and disease had so depleted the Confederate ranks that the 1st and 4th Missouri Infantry regiments were consolidated in November 1862, leaving Sitton and forty other officers surplus. Many of those men, Sitton among them, returned to the Trans-Mississippi by the end of 1862 bearing broad orders to recruit in Missouri.

Operating from Batesville, Sitton and another officer (Harper) found recruiting perilous enough along the Missouri-Arkansas border that they suspended the venture. At Little Rock in April 1863, Gen. Sterling Price assigned Sitton and other supernumerary officers to the command of Capt. John Thrailkill, but that officer left for Missouri and never returned. Awaiting additional orders, Sitton spent a year in Fulton County, Arkansas, in the Evans's Mill neighborhood only five miles from the Missouri border. He dodged federal patrols, visited his home in Washington County on several occasions (including a visit in February 1864 after his family had become refugees), and undertook temporary military tasks in northeast

Arkansas such as handling Confederate bonds and currency and recruiting for Col. Thomas R. Freeman's Missouri Cavalry regiment. While boarding at Evans Mill, Sitton spent considerable time socializing at church meetings and other community gatherings, and began seeing Ellen Copeland, the fifteen year-old daughter of Capt. John M. Copeland of Freeman's regiment. Copeland and Sitton did not approve of one another, leading to several dramatic armed confrontations between father and suitor. Impending violence between them (a shotgun duel was proposed) was avoided only after Sitton was called to active duty with Confederate forces in the summer of 1864.

In June 1864, Sitton was assigned second lieutenant in Company G of Col. Edward T. Fristoe's Missouri Cavalry regiment. Shortly afterward, he became captain of the company. Fristoe's regiment became part of Col. Thomas R. Freeman's brigade of Gen. John S. Marmaduke's division. Nearly half of the men hailed from Oregon County, Missouri, and many others from the bordering counties in Arkansas, leading to Sitton's close associations with Maj. Matthew G. Norman and other soldiers that lasted long after the war. He and his company helped guide Sterling Price's army during the Missouri Expedition in September 1864, leading it to Iron and Washington counties. During the Battle of Pilot Knob, Sitton's company was diverted from a direct charge upon Fort Davidson to chase federal wagons and stragglers. He was three miles from Fort Davidson amidst a horde of refugees on the Middlebrook road when the fort's magazine blew up and heard the explosion plainly. He visited the battlefield the following day, and Potosi, which he found sacked and gutted, on 30 September. Fristoe's command remained active as Price's army proceeded to Washington, Jefferson City and Independence; Sitton's command was frequently in the army's advance. The unit fought at Little Blue (Independence) on 21 October, and at Big Blue River on 23 October 1864. At the latter, in the worst combat Sitton had endured since Corinth, Mississippi, a Yankee shot him through his right side. Believing it a mortal wound, Sitton's men carried him to a battlefield hospital where he was placed in a "dead room," Sitton survived his wound but became a prisoner of war. He was imprisoned at Kansas City, St. Louis, and Johnson's Island, Ohio, until taking the oath of allegiance and being released on 15 May 1865.

Sitton joined his family, refugees in Alexander County, Illinois. In 1866-1867, Sitton taught subscription schools in Illinois and Oregon County, Missouri. He married Nancy George in Oregon County in November 1867; their first child, Albert Ross Sitton, was born in October 1868. In November Sitton moved his family to Boone County, Arkansas, where he taught subscription schools around Bellefonte and worked as an agent for the Maggard nursery at Harrison, traveling extensively in northern Arkansas. In December 1871 he returned to his wife's family's farm on Frederick Fork of the Eleven Point River in Oregon County, Missouri. Sitton continued teaching schools, operated a nursery, and was appointed a justice of the peace. He entered local politics in November 1872 by running for and being elected superintendent of schools. He served four years as Oregon County sheriff and collector, 1874-1878, and, later, a term as presiding judge of the county court. At the end of Sitton's journal in 1882, the Sitton family included two sons and a daughter (twin sons had died), and had moved to Salem, Missouri for better educational opportunities for the children. They do not seem to have stayed long and returned to Oregon County where Sitton engaged in farming, stock raising, merchandising, and real estate ventures. He spent the last decades of his life at Garfield in Oregon County, where he was postmaster for sixteen years. In 1897, Sitton represented Oregon County at the Wilson's Creek reunion and National Farmers Congress. At the time of his death in 1915 he was eulogized as the "soul of honor" and a kind and generous man. He was one of the region's best known citizens.

Sitton's journal entries begin in January 1860 and continue through April 1882, when they end for no apparent reason. Sitton made near-daily memoranda on scraps and slips of paper during most of the war, later copying them in volumes. His journal survived against all odds, including being rooted up and scattered by hogs after it was buried by Sitton for safekeeping. When he was wounded at Big Blue, Sitton put his papers in the hands of an officer who was later killed in Oregon County. The papers were believed lost but Sitton recovered them in 1866. After his capture, Sitton continued his journal,

concealing his papers during several searches as a prisoner of war. He recopied his journals in 1867, but noted (see the entry for 25 February 1864) that he had sanitized certain portions pertaining to his activities in Bollinger, Butler, Oregon, Shannon, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, and Wayne counties in Missouri in 1864, after which he burned the originals. At the time of the recopying and editing in 1867, Radical militia units were operating against former rebels in Oregon and Shannon counties and Sitton did not want his journal ever to become evidence against him. He recopied his journal again in 1880, using three preprinted, leather-covered account ledger books. These closely-written volumes (Sitton began all three on page "A" of the alphabetical index) comprise the surviving journal and are the set made available for microfilming by the State Historical Society of Missouri. Believing that the postwar record of his life might become monotonous, Sitton had abandoned his long practice of almost daily entries. Thereafter he began regular monthly summaries, still quite detailed, but he elaborated only on significant events. The entries end in April 1882, only eighty-three pages into the third and last known volume. There is no indication that the record-keeping would end, or why it did so.

Sitton's journal is a significant addition for the Civil War and its aftermath in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. Sitton served in four different southern units including an Arkansas state unit, the Missouri State Guard, 4th Missouri Infantry, and Fristoe's Missouri Cavalry. His record of activities with the Seventh Division of the Missouri State Guard and Fristoe's cavalry regiment are especially valuable resources for these largely obscure organizations. Sitton participated in regular army operations in Missouri, Arkansas, and Mississippi, and described combat at Wilson's Creek, Independence and Lexington, Missouri, and Iuka and Corinth, Mississippi. The account of Sitton's interlude in northern Arkansas in 1863-1864, when Sitton would have been considered a guerrilla by Union authorities, is a very useful addition to other accounts of the war on the border between Arkansas and Missouri. So also is the record during Price's Expedition and the fighting at Big Blue that led to Sitton's wounding and capture. Sitton resumed his journal while still in a battlefield hospital, noting repeated rifling of his pockets by Yankee scroungers during and after the battle. His narrative of hospitalization and incarceration as a prisoner of war during a period of calculated harshness toward prisoners of war by the government makes for grim reading but is nonetheless a useful resource. During his time in military service, Sitton met or mentioned in his journal many prominent southern officers including Sterling Price, James H. McBride, William O. Coleman, Thomas R. Freeman, Edward T. Fristoe, and E. T. Wingo. He also mentioned guerrillas Sam Hildebrand and John M. Copeland as well as a number of lesser known soldiers and a host of Ozark residents.

Sitton's postwar journal is no less interesting, beginning with his release from Johnson's Island prison in May 1865. He was penniless with only the Confederate uniform on his back when he found his family living in southern Illinois among Unionist refugees from Missouri. He was also physically ill and suffering from what would now be diagnosed as post traumatic stress disorder. Subsequent journal entries record Sitton's difficult but upward personal trajectory as a school teacher, farmer, family man, civil servant, and prosperous businessman. Sitton carefully noted his travels, the folks who put him up at night, incidents of farm life, attendance at church, and significant personal business events. There are many entries reflecting Sitton's serious-mindedness, such as detailed passages on the vicissitudes of teaching school, co-founding of a Baptist church in Arkansas and ultimate exclusion over the orthodoxy of belief, activities as a nurseryman's agent, farmer and general merchant, and electioneering and local politics in Oregon County.

Three scrapbooks (volumes 4-6) of newspaper clippings, ca. 1896-1913, reflect Sitton's interest in the Civil War and in the United Confederate Veterans, of which organization Sitton was both a local (Thomasville Camp No. 751) and state officer. Many of the clippings pertained to events, personages, and places that Sitton knew, such as items concerning the Missouri Brigade, prisoner of war camp at Johnson's Island, Ohio, and the death of Gen. J. O. Shelby. Items concerning the Battle of Wilson's Creek include a list of veterans of the battle living in Oregon County, an item by Union veteran Eugene F.

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Ware published on the occasion of the Wilson's Creek reunion in 1897, and Sitton's reply to Ware via a letter published in the Oregon County newspaper. Genealogical materials in the scrapbooks include the obituary of Sitton's mother (1901) and a Sitton family genealogy to about 1910, in volumes 4 and 6, respectively.

Folders 1-2 contain miscellaneous papers and photographs. Among the papers in Folder 1 are two undated summaries of Sitton's military service, resolutions of a church committee concerning relations between Freewill Baptist and Northern Baptist churches. Folder 2 consists of copies of seven photographs showing Sitton and other individuals over the years. The earliest images are two tintypes, including a view of an unidentified young woman and another showing two young men, one of whom is wearing a "battle shirt" frequently associated with Missouri guerrillas. The identification "J J" is scratched into the top left corner of this plate. Postwar cabinet photographs and postcard views show Sitton in various stages of later life including a view in his United Confederate Veterans uniform and another showing Sitton among a group of former sheriffs of Oregon County, ca. 1910. High quality scans of the photographs are available.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection consists of a three-volume journal, scrapbooks, miscellaneous papers, and photographs, 1860-1913 of a Missouri Confederate soldier and postwar resident of Oregon County, Missouri. The journal, 1860-1882, documents service in the Missouri State Guard and other Confederate units in Missouri, Arkansas, and Mississippi during the Civil War, wounding and capture at the Battle of Big Blue in 1864, and imprisonment at Kansas City, St. Louis, and Johnson's Island, Ohio. Postwar entries concern teaching subscription schools, office holding and electioneering, social affairs, and church matters in Alexander County, Illinois, Boone County, Arkansas, and Oregon and Dent counties in Missouri. Three scrapbooks, miscellaneous papers and photographs, ca. 1896-1913, include newspaper clippings about the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Johnson's Island prison, and other Civil War events, United Confederate Veterans activities, and other aspects of Sitton's life.

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INVENTORY

volumes 1-3: Journals, 1860-1880

- Volume 1: Journal, January 1860—July 1863
- Volume 2: Journal, August 1863—December 1874
- Volume 3: January 1875—April 1882

volumes 4-6: Scrapbooks, ca. 1896-1913

[selected contents noted below]

Volume 4: Scrapbook, ca. 1896-1901

- “Confederate Dead,” of Missouri Brigade
- “Order Number Eleven,” by Anie Andre
- Sitton appointed delegate to Farmers National Congress, 1897
- Death of Gen. J. O. Shelby, 1897
- Veterans of Wilson’s Creek in Oregon County
- Obituary of Martha F. Sitton, 1901
- Wilson’s Creek Reunion, 1897 [Sitton attended]
- Eugene F. Ware’s description of Wilson’s Creek and Sitton’s reply

Volume 5: Scrapbook, ca. 1897-1913

- “The Battle of Wilson’s Creek. An Interesting Reminiscence,” by A. A. Carnahan
- “Under Difficulties. A True Story of War Times,” by W. R. Lindsey [Wayne County family banished from Missouri]
- Reorganization of United Confederate Veterans, Camp No. 751 (Thomasville, Mo.), 23 October 1897. John J. Sitton, Camp Commander
- “Ex-Confederate Officers,” 1908. Sitton appointed UCV quartermaster.
- “Recalls Wingo’s Bravery,” at Lexington, by A. E. Asbury, 1909
- “Genealogy of the Sitton Family,” to about 1910

Volume 6: Scrapbook, ca. 1899-1909

- Jefferson Davis monument
- Confederate reunion, Charleston, S. C., 1899
- Confederate reunion, Memphis, Tenn., 1901
- Johnson’s Island Prison

folders 1-2: Miscellaneous papers and photographs

Folder 1: Papers, 1872-ca. 1880s

This folder contains two undated summaries of Sitton’s military service in the Civil War; appointment as Justice of the Peace of Oak Grove Township, 1872; Oregon County tax receipt for 1879; and undated resolution of a church committee regarding cooperation between Freewill and Northern Baptist churches.

Folder 2: Photographs, n.d.

Seven views including two tintypes, three cabinet photographs, and two postcard views. Copy prints have been microfilmed; high quality scans of the originals are available.

Tintype: two young men; “JJ” scratched into plate in left upper corner; the individual on the right is unidentified.

Tintype: unidentified young woman

Cabinet photograph of J. J. Sitton [damaged]

Cabinet photograph: “Capt Sitton [illegible] home Laura & waif upstairs Elgan & his father & mother on front porch”

Cabinet photograph: J. J. Sitton in United Confederate veterans uniform in front of unidentified building bearing United States and Confederate battle flags

Postcard view: Former sheriffs of Oregon County, Missouri, ca. 1910

Postcard view: “Captain J. J. Sitton short while before he died Good man”

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