

**Guide to
Henry W. Siebert, Company E,
16th Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry**

**Gettysburg College, Musselman Library
Special Collections & College Archives**

**Processed by Christopher Gwinn
June 2006**

MS – 075: Henry W. Siebert, Company E, 16th Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry

Inclusive Dates: 1863-1865

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Provenance Purchased from Charles Apfelbaum, 2005

Biography

Henry W. Siebert enlisted and was mustered into Company E of the 16th Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry as a Sergeant on September 27th, 1862. Little is presently known of Siebert's early life, other than the fact that he was married as evidenced by the occasional mention of his wife in the 1863 diary. Despite the fact that Siebert had enlisted in late September the regiment was not organized and mustered in as a whole until November of 1862. The unit left the state of Pennsylvania on November 23rd and served the first two months of its existence in the fortifications surrounding Washington. It officially joined the Union Army of the Potomac in February of 1863 in time for the inauguration of hostilities that spring. Siebert took part in many of the battles of the Cavalry Corp. of the Army of the Potomac including Chancellorsville, Aldie, and Gettysburg, all of which he accounted in his diary.

What Siebert's activities were in the year of 1864 are up to speculation. No diary recording his experiences was written, or if it was it is not currently in the library's possession. It can be surmised that he would have been involved in the campaigns of the 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry which included fighting at the May 1864 battles of the Wilderness and Yellow Tavern. Serving under Phillip Sheridan the 16th Pennsylvania was actively engaged with the Confederates during Lt. Gen. U. S. Grants Overland Campaign and unless Siebert was absent on account of sickness, furlough or other duty would have actively participated in those engagements.

Sgt. Siebert was outside the city of Petersburg, Virginia starting in January of 1865. He was involved in the final campaign of the Army of the Potomac, chasing Robert E. Lee from the evacuated earthworks of Petersburg to Appomattox Court House where the fighting in Virginia would end with the surrender of Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia. Of the day Siebert writes, "Great rejoicing in camp the bands are discoursing their gayest pieces." Sgt. Henry Siebert was discharged from the service of the United States on June 17, 1865.

Siebert's diary entries evince the monotony and routine of army life punctuated by brief moments of combat and death. While battles and expeditions are addressed, weather is more frequently the topic of conversation, with rain, snow and unending puddles of mud adding misery to his daily existence. "Got as wet as a kitten" he repeatedly writes, adding to his wife that, "You can't imagine the hardships a soldier has to undergo."

Details of Siebert's post-war life and date of death are currently unknown.

Scope and Content

The Henry W. Siebert journals, of which there are two, cover the years 1863 and 1865 respectively. The journals themselves are leather bound notebooks closed with straps, the whole measuring 3 inches by 6 inches. The 1863 volume numbers 90 pages, with entries for every day. The 1865 diary numbers 150 pages and has entries for January 1, 1865 through May 24, 1865. The entries are generally short in nature, not exceeding a paragraph in length. The text is normally limited to a discussion of the morning weather, general activity of the day and the geographic location reached by nightfall. A number of battles are mentioned, including Chancellorsville, Aldie, Upperville, Gettysburg, Petersburg and Appomattox. Descriptions of the battles contain limited information and normally don't extend farther than a tally of casualties and who gained possession of the field.

Box 1

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Diary, January 1, 1863 – December 31, 1863

Diary, January 1, 1865 – May 24, 1865

1 – 2 Photocopies of Biographical and Unit Information