



BHC-MSS 0063

Guide to the Joseph E. Shadek Civil War Sketchbook

By Elizabeth VanTyul, December 2019

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Shadek, Joseph E.

Title: Joseph E. Shadek Civil War Sketchbook

Dates: 1861-1862

Quantity: 1 box

Abstract: This book is a hybrid sketchbook-scrapbook that contains many wonderfully detailed color and monotone watercolor, pen, and pencil depictions of encampment sites, battle scenes, landscapes, and buildings that were witnessed and unofficially recorded by Corporal Shadek during his tour of duty in the Burnside expedition through the Southeast (1861-1862). Each watercolor is carefully labeled with dates and place names so that the sketches themselves provide a chronicle of the Eighth Connecticut Volunteers, Company A's (8CV, Co. A) travels in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical History

Born in Hartford, Connecticut, Corporal Shadek dedicated his sketchbook to his commanding officer, Captain Henry M. Hoyt of Bridgeport. The 8CV was organized with men who had seafaring experience and thus participated in General Burnside's plan to block outside supply lines along parts of the East coast and to destroy targeted train supply lines.

The 8CV, Co. A, first trained in the late fall of 1861 on Long Island then proceeded to Annapolis, Maryland. One color sketch that appears early in the book shows the 8CV, Co. A's encampment at Annapolis, and is dated December 8, 1861. Another lively sketch is titled "Bombardment of the Rebel Fort Bartow, February 7th, 1862, Roanoke Island, N.C." This sketch depicts the bombardment by Union forces of a dirt fort constructed by the Confederates on Roanoke Island, land strategically bounded by the Croatan and Roanoke Sounds. Toward the end of the sketchbook, a "landscape" painting is included with "Newbern on Fire, after the Battle, March 14th, 1862." New Bern, NC, was the site of fierce fighting between Union and Confederate forces and Union troops occupied the city for the remainder of the war. It was at this location in North Carolina that Company A. suffered its first casualties. Although records of service indicate that Corporal Shadek served until he was discharged for disability in December of 1862, the sketches do not continue past July of 1862, when he drew a building in Morehead City, NC, the point of the CV8, Company A.'s departure for Virginia by steamer.

Scope and Content note:

The creator of the sketchbook is Corporal J.E. Shadek of the 8th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers, Company A. The sketchbook originally measured 8 ½"L x 6 ½"W. In the winter of 2012 the book was disbound during conservation treatment at the NEDCC in Andover, MA. Conservators cleaned and treated individual pages of the sketchbook and re-housed it in a specially made box for storage.

At the same time, the NEDCC photo lab took high quality digital images of the sketchbook for use in exhibitions, photo requests, and collections management.

The book consists of about 55 pages with sketches, newspaper clippings, and paper scraps with orders and passes and was bound by paperboard and leather. There are about 40 sketches, at least half of which are in color. The sketchbook's pages had suffered from staining and warping but these flaws were mitigated through conservation treatment. The title page of Corporal Shadek's sketchbook is typewritten and pasted onto the first page in the book.

The book is a hybrid sketchbook-scrapbook that contains many wonderfully detailed color and monotone watercolor, pen, and pencil depictions of encampment sites, battle scenes, landscapes, and buildings that were witnessed and unofficially recorded by Corporal Shadek during his tour of duty in the Burnside expedition through the Southeast (1861-1862). Each watercolor is carefully labeled with dates and place names so that the sketches themselves provide a chronicle of the Eighth Connecticut Volunteers, Company A's (8CV, Co. A) travels in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Arrangement Note:

No arrangement required.

Administrative information:

See also: The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., owns a second, similar sketchbook by Shadek that covers the CV8's activities in Virginia until Shadek's discharge in December of 1862.

Preferred Citation:

Joseph E. Shadek Civil War Sketchbook (BHC-MSS 0063) Bridgeport History Center.

Names and Subject Tracings

Personal names

Burnside, Ambrose Everett (May 23, 1824 – September 13, 1881)

Hoyt, Capt. Henry M.

Shadek, Corp. Joseph E.

Corporate names

United States--Army. Connecticut Regiment, 8th (1861-1865), Company A.

Subject tracings

Military maneuvers

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865

Watercolor painting

Detailed box and folder listing

Sketchbook is contained in 1 box. Please refer to the Bridgeport History Center's space on the Connecticut Digital Archive for complete access and page level description.