JOSEPH W. AND ORVILLE T. CHAMBERLAIN
PAPERS, 1829–1932

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4 September 2002

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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 4 manuscript boxes, 3 oversize manuscript folder, 1 photograph box, 1 cartes de visite box, 1 cabinet card box, 6 photograph albums, 1 OVB graphics box, 5 OVA photograph folders, 1 cased image, 24 artifacts

COLLECTION DATES: 1829–1932


RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:


NOTES: The original processor of this collection is unknown. It was reprocessed in September 1988 by Hilary Adams.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Joseph Wright Chamberlain (1809–67) was born in Onondaga County, New York. He earned his medical degree and moved west in 1835, traveling through Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, before settling in Leesburg, Kosciusko County, Indiana in 1840. He served as postmaster and physician there until 1851, when he and his family moved to Elkhart, Indiana, following the death of his first wife, Caroline Tryon (1817–51). Joseph Chamberlain served as postmaster, druggist, and bookseller in Elkhart until his death in 1867.

Joseph Chamberlain had six children by two marriages. Two of these children are represented in his papers: Orville Tryon (1841–1929) and Tully (ca. 1844–73).

Orville Tryon Chamberlain was born in Leesburg, Indiana, taught school in Elkhart for three years, then left to attend the University of Notre Dame. He graduated in 1861 and promptly joined the 74th Indiana Regiment. Orville Chamberlain received the Congressional Medal of Honor for “distinguished gallantry” at the Battle of Chickamauga. He was a member of the Army/Navy Legion of Valor (an organization composed of recipients of the Medal of Honor) and served two terms as its commander. He was active in the Legion’s efforts to provide for the widows and orphans of soldiers. Orville Chamberlain read law in Elkhart and was admitted to the bar in 1866. He served as Elkhart City Attorney for four terms and was U. S. District Attorney for the 34th District. He retired from practice in 1901 and moved first to California and then to Arizona, where he died in 1929.

Tully Chamberlain was born in Leesburg around 1844. He served in the 134th Indiana Regiment during the Civil War. Following the war, he moved west where he worked for the Union Pacific Railway and other railroads. He died from gunshot wounds in 1873.

Sources:
Information in collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Chamberlain papers consist of correspondence, regimental history, material dealing with Orville Chamberlain’s military career, and genealogical material.

Chamberlain family and business correspondence includes Joseph Chamberlain’s letters to his father, Milo (ca. 1785–1872) mainly detailing his experiences in the Middle West, 1829–60. There also are a few items dealing with Joseph Wright’s business interests, 1860–67. There also are ten political letters from Schuyler Colfax to Joseph Wright regarding the circulation of the St. Joseph Whig Register and local political matters, 1851–53.

The majority of correspondence dates from 1860–69 concerns Orville Chamberlain’s experiences during and immediately following the Civil War. While most of these letters primarily consist of letters to his father describing army life, there is one that contains an excellent account of the action at Missionary Ridge.

The bulk of the materials from 1870–73 are between Tully and Orville Chamberlain, who was working for railroads in Utah, Nevada, and California. These letters were evidently returned to Indiana after Tully’s death. In addition, there are several letters of recommendation from the various rail companies for whom Tully worked and some correspondence from other friends and relatives.

Other items in the collection document Orville Chamberlain’s legal practice and his work with the Legion of Valor. Much of this deals with his efforts on behalf of families of killed or disabled soldiers from the Civil War through World War I. There also are two regimental histories: one written by Orville Chamberlain about the 74th Indiana Regiment and one by an unknown author with Chamberlain’s annotations. The artifacts appear to be related to Orville’s military service and his involvement with the G.A.R.

The genealogical materials cover the history of the Wright-Chamberlain family. The progenitor of the family had 26 children by three wives, and all his descendants are traced in some detail. These materials also included excerpts from a book written about the family and information on the Wright-Chamberlain family organization.
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Orville Chamberlain, ca. 1870–ca. 1925
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“No just a very little about a very great Regiment the 74th Regt. Ind. Vol. Infty,” “The Walnut Crackers.” 1913
[small album with narrative and photographs]
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Dr. J. W. Chamberlain and son Cased Images

Our Trips:
Pennsylvania in 1898, other eastern points in 1900.
Wright Chamberlain farm near Gibson, Pa. Atlantic City, Pine Plains, N.Y., Poughkeepsie, N.Y., N.Y. City and West Point.

To the Pacific 1902:

Restaurant Storage:
PAA
To the Pacific 1903:
Cripple Creek, Col., Grand Canyon, San Diego, La Jolla, Escondido, San Luis del Rey, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, Saratoga Springs, Seattle, Victoria, B.C.

Our Travels, 1904:
New Orleans, Havana, Los Angeles, Yosemite

“Last Public Appearance of Indiana’s Civil War Battle Flags...1900...”
[newspaper clipping]

Album Storage:
PAA

Album Storage:
PAA

OVB Graphics:
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