

Collection #
M 0870

**KEPHART AND KIDWELL FAMILY
PAPERS, 1857–1929 (BULK 1860–1865)**

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Processed by

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April 2006

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 box

COLLECTION
DATES: 1857–1929 (bulk 1860–1865)

PROVENANCE: William L. Kidwell, Morristown, IN, April 2000

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2000.0477

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The material in this collection relates to two families from Kentucky; the Kepharts and the Kidwells.

Samuel Kephart and Phebe Blackwell, both born ca. 1804 in Kentucky, were parents to eleven children born in Henry County, Kentucky: Emily (b. 1820); Lucinda (b. 1828); Abraham (b. 1829); Francis (b. 1830); John (b. 1832); Margaret (b. 1835); James (b. 1836); Mary Elizabeth (b. 1839); Phebe (b. 1841); Samuel Newton (b. 1842); Mervin (b. 1846).

On 16 August 1843 in Henry County, Emily Kephart married Nathaniel Wilken Kidwell (b. 1812 in Madison County, Kentucky). Their son, Jasper Newton Kidwell, was born 24 May 1844. Nathaniel died on 30 July 1844. Emily then married a master carpenter from Kentucky named Wesley Ross, becoming Mrs. Emily Ross. Emily and Wesley Ross lived in Alto, Howard County, Indiana until September 1864 when they moved to Lincoln, Wabash County, Minnesota. Emily died soon afterwards in December of 1864.

Emily's sister, Mary Elizabeth Kephart (also known as Elizabeth or Bettie) married a farmer named James Clark in Henry County, Kentucky, on 10 January 1860. They lived in Gratz and Owenton in Owen County, Kentucky. Mary Elizabeth died on 15 August 1902 in Owen County.

During the Civil War, Emily's son Jasper Newton Kidwell served in Company F of the 11th Indiana Infantry, enlisting as a private on 31 August 1861. He re-enlisted on 1 February 1864 and mustered out on 26 July 1865 as a sergeant. Jasper was wounded in the leg and shoulder during Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley Campaign at the Battle of Opequon, Virginia (also known as Third Winchester). Two of Emily Kephart's brothers also served in the Civil War, Mervin Kephart and Samuel Newton Kephart. Mervin enlisted on 29 September 1864 as a private in Company G, 54th Kentucky Infantry. He mustered out on 1 September 1865. Samuel Newton (S.N.) mustered into the Kentucky 2nd Calvary in 1861, transferred in 1862 to Battery A of the Kentucky 1st Light Artillery, and then transferred back to the 2nd Calvary in 1863.

Jasper Newton Kidwell recovered from his wounds and eventually married Sarah Elizabeth Knox of Morgan County, Indiana. They lived in Morgan County (likely in the town of Banta) and had five sons: Isaac, John Otis, Oscar, Everett, and Elisha. Jasper died on 22 September 1925.

Sources:

"Civil War Research Database." Database searches for "Kephart" and "Kidwell." Available from <http://www.civilwardata.com>. Cited 19 April 2006.

“Roots Web.” Website searches for “Kephart” and “Kidwell.” Available from <http://www.rootsweb.com>. Cited 15 April 2006.

Information in the collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists primarily of correspondence between Kephart and Kidwell family members, mainly Emily Kephart Kidwell Ross, Mary Elizabeth Kephart, Jasper Kidwell, S.N. Kephart, and Mervin Kephart. There are a few letters from Knox family members and friends of the Kidwells and Kepharts. The correspondence addresses matters such as sickness, death, marriage, crops and prices, religion, and weather. Some letters mention various relatives taken to the Indiana Hospital for the Insane in Indianapolis (later called Central State Hospital).

Much of the correspondence occurs during the Civil War years of 1860–1865 and reveals various family members’ thoughts on slavery and political matters, including the rights of African Americans, the secession of the Southern states and state’s rights, the Republican and Democratic parties, and the election, presidency, and assassination of Abraham Lincoln. In particular, the tensions between pro-slavery and anti-slavery family members are witnessed in the letters written to Emily Kephart Kidwell Ross from her sister Mary Elizabeth Kephart Clark. Although the letters written to Mary Elizabeth from Emily are not in the collection, they apparently expressed pro-abolition sentiments. Mary Elizabeth’s responses to Emily’s letters indicate her belief that the war was being fought over slavery, that the South had a right to own slaves, and that people from Indiana should not concern themselves with Southern “property.” In addition to Mary Elizabeth’s thoughts on the Civil War, letters from other pro-slavery and anti-slavery family members are included. Letters from family members serving in the war mention camp conditions and battles such as Fort Donelson, Grand Gulf, Opequon, and the siege of Vicksburg.

The collection also contains a ca. 1857 penmanship booklet, a program for the 1883 reunion of the 11th Indiana Infantry containing Jasper Kidwell’s name, Jasper Kidwell’s will and partial obituary, and a modern day historiography and coat of arms for the name Kidwell. Documents and receipts include an 1875 warranty deed from William J. Knox to Jasper Kidwell, an 1882 business card for B.F. Witt (War Claims), John O. Kidwell’s 1923 motor vehicle registration, and some promissory notes for John Kidwell.

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0870).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.