

Guide to the Charles King Archival Collection [1933-1977]

Descriptive Summary

Repository

Kenosha Civil War Museum Archives

Language of Material

Material in English

Extent

.4 Linear Feet

1 box containing 5 folders

Abstract

Charles King was a soldier and author who served 70 years on active military duty through five campaigns from the Civil War to World War I. He published more than 60 books and spend a large portion of his career in Wisconsin as a member of the Wisconsin National Guard. Collection includes articles and clippings pertaining to his military and literary career, as well as his death. Material ranges from 1933-1977.

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

- Requests to research the Archives collections must be made 24 hours **in advance** to the curator.
- Collection is open for research on-site at the Kenosha Civil War Museum during business hours: Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- Patrons must sign-in with a curator before use and adhere to Archive rules while utilizing the collections.
- The Civil War Museum reserves the right to accept or deny any research request.

Use Restrictions

Photocopies available upon request. Fee required.

Preferred Citation

(Identification of item), The Charles King Jr. Papers, The Civil War Museum, Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Provenance

The Charles King Jr. Papers were transferred to the Civil War Museum from the Institute for Civil War Studies, Carroll College, Waukesha, Wisconsin.

Processing Information

Processed by: Chris Stape, September 2008.

Biographical Note

Charles King (1844-1933) was a renowned soldier and novelist who has the distinction of being the only United States serviceman ever to participate in five separate military campaigns; the Civil War; the Indian Wars; the Spanish/American War; the Philippine Insurrection; and World War I. In doing so, King served in an active military capacity for some 70 years--the first and only American to do so.

He began his military career in his early teens as a mounted orderly under his father, Brigadier General Rufus King. General King commanded the 2nd, 6th, 7th Wisconsin, and the 19th Indiana regiments, a brigade later known as the Iron Brigade. In 1862 King was personally appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York by then U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. He graduated in June 1866. He remained at West Point as an artillery tactics instructor until January 1871, reaching the rank of 1st Lieutenant. Desiring a more active role in the Army, King was transferred to the 5th U.S. Cavalry serving under General George Crook. As a member of the 5th Cavalry, King participated in the Indian Wars throughout the Arizona Territory and the Northern Plains. During this time King befriended the unit's scout, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. The two remained friends for years and King would later help to write screenplays for Cody's silent films.

King aided in reconstruction after the Civil War serving as aide de camp for Colonel W.H. Emory, commander of the U.S. Department of the Gulf in New Orleans, Louisiana, from 1871-1874. It was in New Orleans that King met Adelaide L. Yorke, a sea captain's daughter. The two married and had 4 children, one of whom, Rufus King, would later become a commander in the U.S. Navy. King returned to the Indian campaign in 1874 as a troop commander. During the Battle of Sunset Pass in Arizona, an Apache bullet shattered his arm, a wound that would never fully heal. Despite the injury, King remained as troop commander for the next five years. Finally, in June of 1879, at the age of 35 and the rank of captain, King retired due to his injuries.

King returned to active duty as a Professor of Military Science and Tactics at the State University of Wisconsin, later to become the University of Wisconsin at Madison. It was during this time that he began writing a series of articles for the Milwaukee Sentinel about his experiences in the Sioux Campaign of 1876. These evolved into his first book, *Campaigning with Crook*. King continued to write articles and began working on romantic novels based on his military experiences.

In 1882, King was appointed colonel in the newly formed Wisconsin National Guard. His leadership of the Milwaukee Light Horse Troop in 1886 was instrumental in the quelling of the Milwaukee labor riots. King again retired in 1892, this time from his post as commander of Wisconsin's 4th Infantry Regiment, to take a position as Commandant of the Michigan Military Academy. His second retirement was to be short-lived, however. With the outbreak of the Spanish/American War, King was recommissioned as Brigadier General of Volunteers in 1898 and led regiments in Manila to assist in the Spanish surrender of the Philippines and the insurrection that followed. He returned to Wisconsin and was made Brigadier General of the Wisconsin National Guard in 1904. There, he trained troops enlisting for World War I. King remained in active service at various military academies until 1932 when he retired from his last command at St. John's Military Academy in Delafield, WI.

King's 70 years of military experiences fueled a long and successful writing career which yielded more than 60 books in over 400 editions, and an estimated 250 short stories and articles. He is often credited as being one of the originators of the "Western " genre of American literature-- a romantic and dramatic genre with a foundation in historical realism. At least 5 of his stories were adapted for film. Almost all his writings revolved around the U.S. Army and his involvement in the Civil War, Indian Wars, and the Spanish-American War. Another common theme to King's writings was the Native American. Based on his own experiences, King's portrayal of Native Americans was at times harsh--painting a picture of them as savages and barbaric people--yet he also described his sympathy and his

understanding of their desire to defend their homeland and protect their way of life. King heavily criticized U.S. government corruption and its failure to honor Native American treaties.

King's most popular writings include: *Campaigning with Crook*, *The Colonel's Daughter*, *Daughter of the Sioux*, *Fort Frayne*, and *Under Fire*.

Charles King died as the result of a fall in his home, March 17, 1933. He is buried at Forest Home Cemetery in Milwaukee, WI.

Collection Overview

The collection is divided into 5 series, one folder each: West Point--Class of 1866; Articles & Reminiscences; Funeral; Yorke; and Misc. Letters, Photos & Transcriptions. Series 2 contains a bibliography from the Charles King Collection at the National Library of Australia, Canberra, as well as an informative thesis dealing with the effect King's military career had on his literary accomplishments. Series 3 contains photographs taken at King's funeral including uniformed Army generals in attendance, several lengthy obituaries providing extensive biographical information. Series 5 contains a reminiscence by King's aunt concerning her life growing up with King's grandfather and social visits by Winfield Scott, Robert E. Lee, Washington Irving, and Daniel Webster. The reminiscence references the 1863 New York Riots, the Fall of Richmond, and the family's trip to Europe following the Civil War. Series 5 also includes a photograph of King, age 81, and several photocopies of letters from King to his physician discussing medical ailments and reflections from King about his military career and interactions with the Nez Perce, Sioux, and Shoshone Indians.

Related Materials

Charles King Artifact Collection, 54 items including silverware and photographs.
Kenosha Civil War Museum Special Collections

Charles King Library Collection: 123 items
Kenosha Civil War Archives Reading Room

Detailed Container List

Box 1

Folder 1 of 6: West Point, Class of 1866

- News clippings from 1966 describing centennial celebration of West Point (NY) graduating class of 1866. Brief biographical mention of King.
- Three printed programs from centennial celebration above event.
- Biographical sketch of King from U.S. Military Academy Association of Graduates Annual Report June 12, 1933.
- One page from ceremony program, includes photo of King as well as his son, Charles King III

Folder 2 of 6: Articles and Reminiscences

- Photocopy of 1963 edition of "Charles King: American Army Novelist -- A Bibliography from the Collection of the National Library of Australia, Canberra. 1963, by C.E. Dornbusch.
- Typed draft of 1945 college thesis by Alice Katherine Gregory titled, "Captain Charles King - The Army's Novelist." This is a biography of King centering on his military career and the role it played in his literary pursuits. The 48-page manuscript includes numerous references and footnotes.
- Typed letter to King from Grant Fitch, a distant relative, regarding family descendants. Included is a brief family tree of descendants of Thomas Fitch including Charles King. Also included is a photograph of a tombstone rubbing taken by Grant Fitch in England in 1908 at the grave of Thomas Fitch.

Folder 3 of 6: Funeral

- Photographs:

- Grant Fitch and Elliot Fitch, with soldiers in background. Appears to be at the Funeral of King. (Identified in ink on front of image)
- General Quill and General Parker, in uniform. Presumably at funeral of King. (Identified in ink on front of image).
- Photograph of Wisconsin Guard of Honor at the grave of King. Soldiers salute as casket passes. (Further information and identification in ink on back of image). Folder also includes a second clearer copy of this image with black ink writing on the front.
- Two copies of a photograph depicting Rev. William Oliver Johnson of Saint Paul's preceding the funeral cortège (King's casket in background).
- Photograph of Wisconsin Governor Albert G. Schmedeman in attendance at the funeral.
- Photograph of Maj. Gen. Parker, Gen. Imuel(?), and a Capt. Darcy, all in uniform.
- Photograph of Mrs. Fitch and an unidentified man walking in the funeral procession.

- Obituaries:

- Several newspaper obituaries, both original clippings and copies, marking the death of King.
- Local newspapers from Milwaukee describe Wisconsin ties
- Several contain interesting anecdotes from King's military adventures

- Newspaper Tributes

These clippings, published in installments on April 9, 16, and 23, 1933 by the Milwaukee Journal, are titled, "Seventy Romantic Years of Soldiering." They include extensive biographical information and images.

- Letter of Condolence:

Letter to King's son, Commander Rufus King, upon the death of his father from Colonel Fred C. Best, conveying condolences from all graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Folder 4 of 6: Yorke

- Various short writings on the genealogy of the King and Yorke families. Majority deals with the Yorke family.
- One photocopy of 1764 obituary of Thomas Yorke.
- Small photograph and transcript of letter written by Thomas Yorke (participant in the

American Revolutionary War) dated September 20, 1777, requesting military assistance in the form of horses and weapons from a General Newcomb.

- A small drawing of the Coat of Arms from the Yorke family with discussion of its meaning.
 - 2 small modern photo albums holding a total of 29 photographs, drawings, and silhouettes of members of the King and Yorke families. Images include:
 - Thomas Jones Yorke (2), Charles Heath Bernard, Samuel Yorke, Col. Charles Blanchot, Ellen Yorke, Marguerite Blanchot, Countess Dessoffy nee: Helen Beauregard, Count Henri de Beauregard, Countess de Beauregard nee: Jean Blanchot, Ogden Yorke.
 - Edward Thomas Yorke, Margaret J. Yorke, Samuel Yorke, Mary Jones Yorke, Simon Yorke, Lewis Yorke, Saint Johns Episcopal Church in Salem New Jersey, Andrew Yorke, Rachel Yorke Jackson, Rachel Jackson, Sarah Yorke Jackson, Thomas Yorke, the father of Adelaide L. Y. King (presumably Charles King's father-in-law), "Grandma" Yorke, Adelaide Lavender Yorke, and Charles King (likely King's grandfather).
 - Significantly, the second photo album also contains 2 images of Charles King--one in riding gear, and the other in military uniform standing by a cannon at West Point, taken in 1865.
 - Typed family history of the Yorke and Robeson families tracing decedents including Charles King.
- Photographs:
- One image of a figure (statue) of Sarah Yorke Jackson, then standing at the National Museum in Washington, D.C.
 - One photograph of 2 portrait miniatures, each bearing the likeness of a different unidentified man.
 - Two photographs (one small, one larger) of a portrait miniature depicting Thomas Yorke.
 - Print of a drawing of St. John's Episcopal Church "where the older generation of Yorke's are buried".
 - Photograph of a painting depicting Eleanor Yorke Hancock.
 - Small photograph of Frank Kingsley in uniform, taken in France World War 1 [1917].
 - Photograph of the home of Charles Kingsley.

Folder 5 of 6: Misc letters, photos, & transcriptions

- Undated typed reminiscence titled, "A Gentleman of the Old School" dictated by King's aunt, Gertrude King Schuyler. The manuscript details Schuyler's memories of King's grandfather, also named Charles King. Includes description of King's grandfather's friendship with Winfield Scott, Robert E. Lee, Washington Irving, and Daniel Webster among other personalities. Schuyler recounts her family life as well as those of her nephews (King) but does not directly mention King. Items of interest include an apparent reference to King as "a little fellow in white frock" who would dance before bedtime. Includes description of a mob attack on the family home during the 1863 New York riots as well as their family's fleeing to Europe following the fall of Richmond, and their later interactions in Italy with Pope Pius IX.
- Anonymous typed manuscript titled "The Story of the Battle Hymn." Recounts the origins of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" as having come from enthusiastic soldiers

of the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin, and 19th Indiana regiments (known as the Iron Brigade). Commanded at the time by King's father, General Rufus King, a member of the Iron Brigade's 6th Wisconsin, joyously struck up a rendition of "John Brown's Body" during a processional. The entire brigade soon joined in. Singer Julia Ward Howe was in attendance and her later rendition of the Battle Hymn of the Republic gained nationwide fame.

- Small photograph of Charles King, age 81, atop his horse, Star.
- Postcard depicting "King's Manor" in Jamaica, Long Island.
- Photocopy of a biography of King's literary endeavors titled, "Forgotten Novelist of the Frontier: Army General Charles King," from the June 1966 issue of Denver Westerners Monthly Roundup newsletter.
- One letter from Betty Bartholet, hand-written in 1977 to "Betty and Dick" regarding photographs of Chalkley Hall (Pennsylvania?). The letter contains reminiscences of her family's experiences with a family friend who was an escaped slave and their trials during the stock market crash of 1929. [*Connection to Charles King is unclear.*]
 - ♦ The above letter included two large photographs, one titled "General View of Chalkley Hall" depicts a large house with statue in front. The other photo is labeled, "Doorway: Plain pediment supported on half columns, all of granite; wooden door and frame". This is apparently a doorway from Chalkley Hall.
- Photocopy of a portion of a biography of Kings' literary endeavors from a publication titled "The Dude Rancher".
- Photocopies of several letters from King to his doctor, T. Raymond Hebard, in 1929. Among the letters, King describes his injuries sustained during the Indian Wars at the hands of the Apaches, and mentions his pursuit of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perces, Chief Washakie and his Shoshone scouts. Includes a brief recap of his military career, and he laments the physical problems of old age including his slow recovery after being struck by a car.
- Various photocopies of photographs of King.
- Photocopy of King obituary from the Cheyenne (WY) Tribune detailing how King was responsible for nick-naming the Officer's Club at Fort Laramie "Old Bedlam."
- Carbon copy of biographical sketch of King from US Military Academy Association of Graduates Annual Report June 12, 1933. The more complete annual report which includes additional graduates can be found in this collection in Folder 5.
- Photocopy of the introduction written by King for *The Bozeman Trail*.

Folder 6 of 6: Magazines

- McClures Magazine, July 1894. Includes 8 images of King (p. 134-136).

- The National Magazine, November, 1897. Includes a 4-page article titled, "The National Novelist (Captain Charles King)" by Henry Austen. Also inside the magazine are two newspaper clippings affixed to the pages. Both articles refer to King being appointed brigadier general and commander of the Wisconsin Volunteers Brigade.