

Guide to the Elmer E. Ellsworth Archival Collection [1858-1971] (bulk 1858-1865)

Descriptive Summary

Repository

Kenosha Civil War Museum Archives

Language of Material

Material in English

Extent

1.0 Linear Feet

2 manuscript boxes, 2 flat oversize boxes

Abstract

Elmer E. Ellsworth, a personal friend and confidant of Abraham Lincoln, is widely considered to have been the first officer killed during the Civil War. A highly regarded soldier and drill instructor, Ellsworth introduced French Zouave military tactics to various military units throughout the Midwest and Eastern United States. This collection, which covers the period 1858-1971, consists of correspondence, a personal ledger, and various short writings and sketches by Ellsworth concerning his involvement with the U.S. Zouave Cadets and Zouave training in Illinois and New York. The collection also contains clippings, books, short biographies, photographs, and memorabilia pertaining to Ellsworth's military career and the nation's reaction to his death.

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 Archives 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 Elmer E. Ellsworth Collection, The Civil War Museum, Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Provenance

The Elmer E. Ellsworth Collection is on loan from Lake Forest Academy, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Processing Information

Processed by: Chris Stape, October 2008.

Biographical Note

Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth (1837-1861) was born in Malta, New York to a poor and struggling family. Despite aspirations of becoming a soldier, his own limited schooling and his family's economic situation prevented him attending the West Point Military Academy as he had hoped. By his late teens, Ellsworth had moved to New York City and later to Chicago, taking various jobs as a clerk and eventually as a patent solicitor, studying military science in his spare time. Ellsworth joined a volunteer National Guard unit in Illinois and was later appointed commander. A chance meeting in 1856 with a French Army officer who served with a Zouave regiment in the Crimean War stirred in Ellsworth a fascination with Zouave military tactics--a style he later introduced to several military units he established. His reputation as a stern but remarkable drill master grew and in 1858 he was engaged to drill the Rockford City (Illinois) Grays, a volunteer unit organized two years earlier. Later that year, Ellsworth was employed in Madison, Wisconsin to drill the Governor's Guard. His reputation and success led to his election in 1859 as commandant of the U.S. Zouave Cadets, a company superseding the National Guard Cadets. His new unit gained a degree of fame in the Midwest for their acrobatic drilling style and colorful uniforms. Those uniforms, designed by Ellsworth, consisted of short jackets, gaiters, and fezzes. The unit later toured the eastern United States including a performance for president James Buchanan at the White House in 1860.

During this time, Ellsworth became engaged to Carrie Spafford, whose father insisted the two only be married after Ellsworth was able to financially support his new wife. Thus, in 1860, Ellsworth took a position as clerk at the law office of Abraham Lincoln, in Springfield, Illinois. Ellsworth and Lincoln became close friends and when Lincoln ran for President, Ellsworth campaigned on his behalf and joined Lincoln on his inaugural trip to Washington. With the firing on Fort Sumter, May 23, 1861, Lincoln immediately called for 75,000 volunteers for military service. Ellsworth resigned his post with the Cadets and returned to New York, recruiting a regiment of 1,100 men from the city's volunteer firemen. The unit Ellsworth established, officially known as the 11th New York Infantry, became more widely known as the 1st Regiment, New York Fire Zouaves. Upon their muster into the regular Union Army, the Fire Zouaves became what many consider the first all volunteer regiment of the Civil War.

On May 24, 1861, Ellsworth's Fire Zouaves were ordered into Northern Virginia to seize and control the port of Alexandria. Meeting no resistance, Ellsworth and a small detachment advanced to capture the city's telegraph office. En route to the office, Ellsworth and his men spotted a large Confederate flag flying over the Marshall House Inn. Ellsworth proceeded to remove the flag from the roof and was on his way back down the stairs where he was met by the innkeeper, James W. Jackson. Jackson drew a shotgun and shot Ellsworth through the heart, killing him instantly. Jackson in turn, was killed by one of Ellsworth's men, Corporal Francis Brownell. Ellsworth's body was brought to Washington where it lay in state on May 25. It was later moved to New York's City Hall where thousands paid their respects.

Elmer Ellsworth was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, and his death became a rallying cry for the Union. "Remember Ellsworth" was a popular patriotic slogan of the time and the 44th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment began calling itself the "Ellsworth Avengers." Countless poems, songs, and illustrations were composed in his memory and the city of Ellsworth, Wisconsin was named in his honor.

Ellsworth is buried in Hudson View cemetery in Mechanicsville, New York.

Collection Overview

The collection consists of approximately 125 items covering the period 1858-1971. A significant portion of the collection consists of the records of two Ellsworth biographers: Louis E. Laflin Jr. and Charles A. Ingraham. These items include biographical sketches, published biographies, transcripts of Ellsworth letters and other writings, and drafts of unpublished biographical works. The collection also includes many photographs, lithographs, and engravings of Ellsworth and the events surrounding his death. Several memorial items are included such as published poems, songs, and other tributes. Of note are several items created in Ellsworth's own hand. Box 2, Folder 3 contains Ellsworth's personal ledger in which he wrote an original 102-page essay, Industrialism as the Ruling Tendency of the Age. In his essay Ellsworth describes his personal philosophy and the dangers posed to freedom by the advance of industrialism. The ledger also includes a transcription from biographer Laflin on each page. Other items created by Ellsworth in the collection include a poem, lyrics to a song, and several drawings.

Related Materials

18 items currently on display:

- Card: "Cadets Terpsichorean Club - Elmer E. Ellsworth President".
- Advertisement for a military program at Camp Sennissippi in Rockford, Illinois.
- Entry ticket to the First Grand Military and Civic Ball of the Cadets of the National Guard. Ellsworth is mentioned as member of the organizing committee.
- Carte de visite of Ellsworth taken by Matthew Brady.
- Ticket to the First Annual Ball of the Governor's Grays, held shortly before Ellsworth and his Zouaves embarked on a tour of eastern U.S. cities.
- Sword belt worn by Ellsworth.
- 8 commemorative envelopes memorializing Ellsworth.
- Large portrait (oil) of Ellsworth, given to his fiancée, Carrie Spafford.
- Sheet music for "Colonel Ellsworth's Funeral March."
- Dedication program for Ellsworth Memorial Monument in Mechanicsville, New York.
- Photograph of Ellsworth Memorial Monument, in Mechanicsville, New York.

Detailed Container List

Box 1 of 3 (oversize)

Folder 1 of 3: "To the Memory of Col. E.E. Ellsworth" -- Printable Glass Neg.

- Glass plate negative labeled "To the memory of Col. E.E. Ellsworth" depicting a poster with a portrait of Ellsworth.

Folder 2 of 3: Over-sized Ellsworth Portraits

- Large black & white lithograph portrait of Sergeant Brownell, published by T.W. Strong, captioned "The Avenger of Col. Ellsworth."
- Large black & white lithograph portrait of Ellsworth published by T.W. Strong, captioned "Assassinated in Alexandria VA. May 24th, 1861."

Folder 3 of 3

- Black & white lithograph portrait of Ellsworth published by L. Prange & Co. Boston, captioned "Late Col. of the New York Fire Zouaves."

Unfolded:

- Color lithograph portrait of Ellsworth published by Currier & Ives, captioned "Assassinated at the Capture of Alexandria, May 24th 1861."
- Black & white lithograph portrait of Ellsworth published by William Sartain, captioned "One of the First Martyrs of the Great Rebellion."

Box 2 of 3

Folder 1 of 2: American Bar Assn. Journal

- "American Bar Association Journal", May 1944. Cover depicts Ellsworth in uniform leaning on sword. Includes a biographical sketch titled "Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth: The Odyssey of a Young Knight", p. 278-279, 314-315.

Folder 2 of 2: Youth's Temperance Advocate

- Broadside newspaper: "Youth's Temperance Advocate", Vol. XXII, No. 6. New York, June 1861. Includes short article about Ellsworth, p. 24.

Unfolded:

- Book (copy 1 of 2) titled, *Elmer E. Ellsworth and the Zouaves of '61*, by Charles A. Ingraham. Published by University of Chicago Press, 1925. (soft cover)
- Journal/diary handwritten by Ellsworth biographer, Charles A. Ingraham. Contents titled "New York in the War of the Rebellion." Diary has the word "Elsworth" (*sp*) handwritten on the cover. (hard cover)
- Magazine: "The Wisconsin Magazine of History", June 1918, Vol. 1, No. 4. Contains a 25-page biography of Ellsworth written by Charles A. Ingraham which includes a description of the time Ellsworth spent in Wisconsin and a discussion of the possibility that Ellsworth attended school in Kenosha, Wisconsin.
- Magazine: "The Rouser", July 1929. Article about the G.A.R. Convention of 1929 in Rockford, Illinois. Includes a brief biography of Ellsworth.
- Magazine: "Press Impressions", December 1925. Includes article written by Charles A. Ingraham detailing his interest in Ellsworth and the creation of his Ellsworth biography.
- Pamphlet: "Ephraim Elmer Ellsworth: First Martyr of the Civil War", by Luther E. Robinson. 1924. Reprinted from the Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society 1923.
- Book (copy 1 of 2): *Catalog Raisonne of the Portraits of Col. Elmer E. Ellsworth*, by Winfred Porter Truesdell. The Print Connoisseur, Champlain, 1927. Includes introductory essay by Charles A. Ingraham. Spine of book printed, *Ellsworth Portraits*. (hard cover)
- Book (copy 2 of 2): *Catalog Raisonne of the Portraits of Col. Elmer E. Ellsworth*, by Winfred Porter Truesdell. The Print Connoisseur, Champlain, 1927. Includes introductory essay by Charles A. Ingraham. Spine of book printed, *Ellsworth Portraits*. (hard cover)
- Book (copy 2 of 2): titled *Elmer E. Ellsworth and the Zouaves of '61*, by Charles A. Ingraham. Published by University of Chicago Press, 1925. (soft cover)
- Book titled *Colonel Elmer Ellsworth: A biography of Lincoln's friend and first hero of*

the Civil War, by Ruth Painter Randall. Published by Little, Brown & Company, 1960. (hard cover)

Box 3 of 3

Unfolded

- Ledger containing approx. 50 newspaper clippings regarding the death of Ellsworth. Most dated 1861, from New York-area papers. Some small unidentified plant cuttings between two pages.
- Bound, typed transcripts of Ellsworth letters dating from 1858 to 1861. Cover page is titled "The Letters of Elmer E. Ellsworth". Edited by Louis E. Laflin, Jr. The transcripts include indexes and hand drawings (presumably by Laflin) of the paper imprints found on many of the original letters. Several transcripts are found paper-clipped rather than bound, inside the back cover.

Folder 1 of 27: Newspaper Clippings

- Assorted newspaper clippings related to Ellsworth
 - Clipping with picture showing Ellsworth and others in uniform. Dated Dec. 3, 1899
 - 2 clippings: "Lincoln's Tomb Visitors". Illinois State Journal, Oct. 5, 1933, and Sept. 30, 1933.
 - Article about W.H. Conkling and E.E. Whitney and their mutual interest in Lincoln. Illinois State Journal, Oct. 1, 1933.
 - Clipping (title only): "Ellsworth Plans Stratosphere Trip".
 - Clipping: Engraving of Ellsworth from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper
 - Engraving (2 copies): "Death of Ellsworth." Published by Johnson, Fry & Co.
 - Clipping: "Whitney, Admirer of Lincoln, Visitor Here". Illinois State Journal, Sept. 30, 1930.
 - Clipping: "Once Famous Cadets Hear Last Roll Call". Chicago Record Herald, Oct. 11, 1910. Article describes the last reunion of the Zouaves. Col. Laflin, at age 81, was highest commanding officer surviving.
 - Small card with drawing of a standing Ellsworth. "American Press Syndicate" written on back.
 - Empty envelope labeled, "E.E. Ellsworth Newspaper Clippings" from Louis E. Laflin, Jr. Envelope contained... Ellsworth clippings.

Folder 2 of 27: Elmer Ellsworth ledger with original Industrialism as the Ruling Tendency of the Age

- The majority of Ellsworth's personal ledger consists of his original hand-written essay, "Industrialism as the Ruling Tendency of the Age." The 102-page essay was begun March 15, 1860 and continued until at least March 31, 1860. In it, Ellsworth comments on his views of history, modern life, religion, and philosophy. He extols the virtues of self-control and personal freedom and laments the emergence of "Industrialism," which he viewed as a form of slavery. The essay includes a more legible transcription, hand-written in red ink by Ellsworth scholar, Louis E. Laflin. Laflin's work is written directly on the relevant page. A smaller portion of Ellsworth's ledger contains a report of fines administered to the cadets under his command for breach of discipline.

Folder 3 of 27: Inventory Lists

- Typed index titled: "Index for Col. Elmer E. Ellsworth Materials in Cabinet." 8 pages, stapled.
- Typed inventory of assorted Ellsworth pictures, articles, and books. 4 pages, stapled.
- Hand-written, 14 page inventory of Miss Carolyn Godfrey's Ellsworth collection sent to Mrs. Randall, 1958. Inventory lists a total of 579 items. List is missing 2 pages describing items #41- #80 and #201-240.
 - Inventory consists of both loose and stapled portions.
 - Page 12 describes various clippings held in a scrapbook.
- Handwritten letter from Inger Matthews to Louis Laflin, Jan. 9, 1971. Matthews discusses her ancestry and that of Laflin and inquires about a connection to Ellsworth.
- Handwritten note recognizing Louis Laflin as the source of the Ellsworth papers given to the Academy.
- Postal receipt, 1968. Sender: Louis E. Laflin Jr.
- Small undated envelope and card from Elizabeth Rumsey Holmes addressed to "June". Note concerns Holmes finding a newspaper clipping about Ellsworth.
- Hand-written note with address and telephone number of Warren S. Godfrey.

Unfolded:

- Book titled, *Col. E.E. Ellsworth's Book--March 15, 1860: Original Transcription (1)*. Edited by Louis Laflin.
 - Contains the the full transcription of Ellsworth's essay, "Industrialism as the Ruling Tendency of the Age." A preface written by Louis Laflin examines Ellsworth's writing style and philosophy, as well as Laflin's own obstacles in transcribing the often hard-to-decipher handwriting of Ellsworth's original manuscript. Includes index.
- Book titled, *Col. E.E. Ellsworth's Book--March 15, 1860: Second Carbon Transcription (3)*. Edited by Louis Laflin. This is a carbon copy of above. Altered title.

Folder 4 of 27: Transcript of Ellsworth -- Dating from 1859-1861

- Folder is empty

Folder 5 of 27: Commemorative Envelopes #4, c. 1861

- 7 commemorative envelopes (6 in color, 1 B&W) depicting or referring to Ellsworth.

Folder 6 of 27: Commemorative Envelopes #5, c.1861-1935

- 2 commemorative envelopes (one color, 1 B&W). One of which is addressed to Louis E. Laflin Jr., postmarked Aug. 31, 1931.

Folder 7 of 27: Notes, c. 1859

- Untitled poem in Ellsworth's handwriting. First line: "Go forth, my son!"
- Ellsworth's writing of the lyrics for "The Tiger Zouaves." Song is to be sung to the tune of "Viva la Companie".
- Typed tribute to Ellsworth. "Dedicated to all Friends and Associate-Soldiers of the Lamented Colonel E.E. Ellsworth.
- Small scrap of ledger paper. Handwriting is indecipherable.

Folder 8 of 27: Letters to Ellsworth from Garrett Nevius, a friend. October 1860.

- Blank sheet of stationary
- Handwritten letter to Ellsworth from Garret Nevius, dated Oct. 29, 1860. In the letter, Nevins informs Ellsworth that he (Nevius) and several other, "ex members of the Grays, wish to form a Zouaves company," in Rockford, Illinois. Nevius asks Ellsworth for advice and his opinions about the matter. Ellsworth received the letter in Springfield, Illinois. The stationary is printed with an engraving of Lincoln in the upper left corner. Letter is torn into 4 separate pieces.

Folder 9 of 27: Cards with Ellsworth's own writing. c. 1860

- Small card in Ellsworth's own writing on which he notes, "I am discretion itself! Have no Fear!"
- Small handwritten poem by Ellsworth. Attributed to Byron.
- Business/Calling card handwritten and drawn by Ellsworth. The card is for "Devareux Ellsworth and Cos. Proprietors of the American and European Patent Offices."

Folder 10 of 27: Letter of condolence from D.S.F. to Carrie Spafford, May 28, 1861

- Letter of condolence from "D.S.F." sent to Carrie Spafford regarding the death of Ellsworth. Letter mentions the inclusion of a news clipping from the Boston Transcript (May 27, 1861).
- Poem titled, "E. Elmer Ellsworth" by Mary Webb. Along the side are the handwritten words, "from first proof of "Chimes of Freedom and Union". The paper has a pin in it.

Folder 11 of 27: Misc. Photographs

- Oval photo of Ellsworth wearing hat and cape
- Small photo of a standing Ellsworth leaning against a column with long coat, holding a cigar.
- Small photo of Carrie Spafford.
- Small photo of Ellsworth's boyhood home in Mechanicsville, New York.
- Small photo depicting the corner of Ellsworth's boyhood home in Mechanicsville, New York.
- Newspaper clipping from the Utica (New York) Saturday Globe, dated Nov. 26, 1910, with photos of the 8 survivors of Ellsworth's Zouaves. Clipping is affixed to card stock.
- Photo of a drawing by Ellsworth depicting the uniform of the "Howitzer Corps: V.S. Cadets."
- Two different photographs of drawings by Ellsworth depicting the uniform of the V.S. Zouave Cadet Howitzer Corps.
- Small photo of the Ellsworth monument in Mechanicsville, New York.
- Engraving titled, "Murder of Colonel Ellsworth."
- Engraving titled, "Death of Ellsworth," published by Johnson Fry & Co. Publishers, New York.
- Photograph, 8x10, of the home of Samuel Lincoln in Hingham, Massachusetts. Lincoln was the first English Immigrant ancestor of Abraham Lincoln. Handwritten on the back of the photo is, "For my good friend Louis Ellsworth Lafin Jr. from his friend Everett Ellsworth Whitney. With all good wishes." Dated Oct. 10, 1933.

- Photograph, 8x10, of a banner with 4 shields and a star in the center. The banner reads, "Awarded to the U.S. Zouave Cadets by the U.S. Agri'l Society at their Seventh Annual Fair."
- Photograph of piece of paper with unknown handwriting.
- Photograph of Spafford house at Rockford from Warren Godfrey.

Folder 12 of 27: Photograph of group of officers, including Ellsworth, 1860

- Photograph of Ellsworth with 5 others. Handwriting on back notes the photo was taken by Colonel Edwin L. Brand on July 14-19 1860. Identification supplied on back lists: a lieutenant colonel of the 6th Regiment, New York State Militia; Colonel E.E. Ellsworth of the United States Zouaves Cadets; Colonel J.C. Pinkney of the N.Y. Sixth; an adjutant of the 6th; Second Lieutenant Henry Dwight Laflin U.S.2.C.; First Lieutenant Joseph R. Scott, afterward Colonel in the 19th Illinois.

Folder 13 of 27: Ellsworth Photographs--Copies from Brady c. 1860

- Two identical photos (one on card stock) of Ellsworth's cabinet. The items depicted in the photo are listed on the back, including: the suit in which he was killed, and the secession flag from the Marshall House he was carrying at the time.
- Torn fragment of what may be a certificate (?), with a photo of Ellsworth.
- Very small oval portrait of Ellsworth.
- Three quarter bust engraving of Ellsworth, labeled, "Col. Elmer E. Ellsworth, First Firemen Zouaves, N.Y.S.V."
- Photo of Ellsworth taken by Col. E.E. Brand, Chicago, June 1860. Photo is oval printed on rectangular paper stock.
- Three nearly identical photographs of Ellsworth printed from an original taken by Matthew Brady. All three depict Ellsworth full length, left hand on sword, right hand behind back. Two photos appear to have had an encampment scene edited in behind Ellsworth.
- Seven photographs of Ellsworth printed from the same original taken by Matthew Brady. The photographs are of varying sizes. Three are three quarter bust, three are busts, and one is full length.

Folder 14 of 27: Misc. Memorabilia 1

- Handwritten calling card: "Capt. E.E. Ellsworth"
- Playing card (5 of hearts) presented to Ellsworth from "A member of the Albany Burgess Corps."
- Business card for Great Western Depot; Richards, Ellsworth & Co.
- Business card for Fountain Printing Press Manufacturing Co. (orders to be addressed to Devereux, Ellsworth & Co.).

Folder 15 of 27: Dedication Program, Ellsworth Monument, May 27, 1874.

- Folder is empty

Folder 16 of 27: Commemorative Envelopes # 7 c. 1861

- Folder is empty

Folder 17 of 27: Commemorative Envelopes # 2 c. 1861

- Folder is empty

Folder 18 of 27: Commemorative Envelopes # 3 c. 1861

- Folder is empty

Folder 19 of 27: Letter to Ellsworth

- A letter to Ellsworth from Garret Nevius, dated October 22, 1860, from Rockford, Illinois. This letter was written one week prior to another letter he wrote to Ellsworth (found in this collection, Box 3, Folder 8). This letter solicits Ellsworth's advice concerning the current inactivity of the Grays and whether Nevius and other "ex-Grays" should form a new company in Rockford, Illinois, or re-join. Apparently, Nevius wrote this letter expecting to find Ellsworth in Chicago. Upon being informed that Ellsworth was in fact in Springfield, Illinois, Nevius re-wrote a very similar letter (folder 8), sending it to Ellsworth in Springfield.

Folder 20 of 27: Misc. memorabilia # 2

- Small card depicting color image of Lady Liberty mourning at the grave of Ellsworth. Handwriting on back, "Defender of the Stars & Stripes! a nation mourning thy loss; A nations tears, thy memory shall (*indecipherable*).\" Signed: \"Abbie(?) March 1862.\"
- Small red admittance card to \"Cadets' Gymnasium. Good until July 1860.\"

Folder 21 of 27: Ball Ticket and Drawing

- Small card with Illinois crest and shield, hand-drawn by Ellsworth.

Folder 22 of 27 : Camp Sinnissippi Program

- Camp Sinnissippi at Rockford (Illinois) program proof. Events took place September 22-25, 1858. Program includes schedule of events including a full-dress review and skirmishing and bayonet drills led by Commandant, Major E.E. Ellsworth.

Folder 23 of 27: Ellsworth CDV's (2)

- One carte de visite of Ellsworth printed from an image originally taken by Matthew Brady. Image is Ellsworth's head and shoulders in small oval near top of card. It is signed: \"Your friend E.E. Ellsworth\".

Folder 24 of 27: Ellsworth Monument

- Folder is empty

Folder 25 of 27: Brownell Photo and Marshall House Postcard

- Oval photograph of Francis Brownell (seated). Photo is affixed to rectangular card stock.
- Postcard depicting the Marshall House. Card is captioned, \"Marshall House, Alexandria, Va., where Col. Ellsworth and James Jackson met their deaths at the removal of the only confederate flag flying in the city on May 24th, 1861.\"
- Oval photograph of Freeman Conner, in Zouave uniform holding rifle with bayonet. Photo is affixed to heavy card stock.

Folder 26 of 27: Over-sized Ellsworth Portraits

- Color lithograph of Ellsworth standing atop a flag. Image is affixed to blue paper. Handwritten in lower left corner is \"Col. Ellsworth\", in lower right corner: \"1861\".

Folder 27 of 27: Ellsworth Funeral March

- Cover for sheet music: "Col. Ellsworth's Funeral March". Dedicated to Francis E. Brownell Esq. Composed by Sep. Winner.