

The Edward and Elizabeth Ellis Papers, 1861-1865 (Mss 1066)

Edward E. Ellis was born in Pennsylvania in 1832 to Welsh immigrants who later moved to Tallmadge, Ohio. Elizabeth E. Ellis was born in 1835 in London to Welsh parents that immigrated to Newark, Ohio. They were married in 1855 and had three children. On August 14, 1862 Edward enlisted in Company C of the 115th Ohio Voluntary Infantry commanded by Captain John A. Means. He was stationed at Camp Dennison and Camp Pendleton in Cincinnati. At some point he fell ill and Elizabeth left the children with family to nurse him in Cincinnati. Elizabeth became the Matron of Woodward Hospital in Cincinnati in 1863 and Edward was assigned to be the cook there as well.

In November 1863 Edward was reassigned to Fort Rosecrans near Murphreesboro, Tennessee where he was also a cook in a hospital. In November 1864 Edward and several others were taken prisoner, though some escaped. He ended up at Andersonville Prison until May 1865 when he was released and sent to Parole Camp at Vicksburg. On April 26, 1865 Edward was one of about 1600 killed aboard the *S.S. Sultana* as it exploded near Memphis.

The letters between Edward and Elizabeth provide a glimpse into what life was like for both an enlisted man during the Civil War and for a wife and mother struggling to keep her family afloat in rural Ohio. Their lively letters show the disagreements and fears they had over politics and the war. Edward, a Quaker, temperance advocate and abolitionist, supported Lincoln wholeheartedly and enlisted out of a sense of duty. Elizabeth, probably overwhelmed with children and the running of a farm, was unsympathetic to Lincoln and his administration, believing that the war was fought on the backs of the poor to enrich Lincoln and his cronies. Though she was somewhat sympathetic to Copperhead, or anti-war, views, she had no patience for traitors to the United States either. More than anything she wanted Edward home with his family.

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