



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

Captain John C. Casey Journals, 1847-1856

Rachel Menyuk

2013

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | National Museum of the American Indian |
| Title: | John C. Casey letter books |
| Identifier: | NMAI.AC.029 |
| Date: | 1848-1856 |
| Extent: | 1 Linear foot |
| Creator: | Casey, John C. |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | The collection of John C. Casey journals includes three original letter books from Captain John Casey's time in Monterrey, Mexico during the Mexican-American War from 1847-1848 and as an emigration agent at the Seminole Agency in Florida from 1848 to 1856. This covers a period of time that includes the beginning of the third Seminole War. Additionally, one of the letter books also contains a journal of Casey's operations in the Indian Department in Florida from his arrival in August of 1848 until October of 1849. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The John C. Casey Copybooks were purchased by the Museum of the American, Heye Foundation from Gilman's Book Store in 1964. They became a part of the NMAI Archive Center in 1990.

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Menyuk, Archives Technician in 2013.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Captain John C. Casey Journals; National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Access to NMAI Archive Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: nmaiarchives@si.edu).

Conditions Governing Use

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish or broadcast materials from the collection must be requested from National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center. Please submit a written request to nmaiarchives@si.edu.

Biographical / Historical

John Charles Casey was born in England in 1809 but emigrated to the United States as a child and settled with his parents in Paterson, New Jersey. In 1825, Casey enrolled at the Military Academy and following graduation he was commissioned as Brevet Second Lieutenant in the Second Regiment of Artillery in Fort Pike, Louisiana. This fort later served as a staging area for the forced migration of Native Americans by way of the Mississippi and Arkansas River to Indian Territory. In 1831 Casey served as assistant professor of chemistry and geology at the Military Academy but was called back to Fort Pike in 1833. In 1835 the Second Artillery was sent to Tampa Bay, Florida due to increasing hostility with the Seminole community. That same year Casey was promoted to First Lieutenant and took part in several skirmishes and minor actions. He also took several trips into the new Indian Territory after being appointed Acting Agent for transferring Seminoles out of Florida. From 1839 to 1841 Casey served as Purchasing Commissary in New York City and in 1842 he was promoted to Captain, 2nd Artillery. In May 1844, Captain Casey was transferred to the 3rd Infantry. During the war with Mexico Casey was ordered to serve as Chief Commissariat of the Army commanded by Major General Zachary Taylor. At the end of the Mexican War, at his own request due to poor health, he was ordered to Fort Brooke in Tampa Bay. There, he had charge of all Commissary duties for the extensive area of southwest Florida.

In 1849 Casey became Commissioner for the Removal of the Seminole Indians from Florida. Casey was considered qualified partly due to his knowledge of the area as well as his friendly relations with Chief Billy Bowlegs. By 1852 the Bureau of Indian Affairs had been transferred from the War Department to the Interior Department and it was concluded that a new special agent be sent to replace Casey. Casey was reappointed Commissioner in 1854 and returned to Fort Brooke despite his failing health. In May of 1854, Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War, ordered Captain Casey to suspend talks and trade with the Seminole in the belief that only coercive measures would be successful in inducing the Florida tribes to emigrate. Seeing no alternative, Billy Bowlegs led a Seminole war party in December of 1855 against Lt. George Hartsuff's patrol in the Big Cypress starting the Third Seminole War. Captain Casey who had long been fighting tuberculosis died of pulmonary consumption on December 25, 1856. It is said that Casey's remains were taken with Billy Bowlegs on the vessel *Grey Cloud* when Bowlegs and the remaining Seminoles departed from Edgemont Key at the close of the war in 1858. Efforts to find Casey's burial place have been unsuccessful.

Sources: Wallace, Fred. "The Story of Captain John C. Casey," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 41 No. 2 (Oct 1962), pp127-144

Scope and Contents

The collection of John C. Casey journals includes three original letter books from Captain John Casey's time in Monterrey, Mexico during the Mexican-American War from 1847-1848 and as an emigration agent at the Seminole Agency in Florida from 1848 to 1856. This covers a period of time that includes the beginning of the third Seminole War. Additionally, one of the letter books also contains a journal of Casey's operations in the Indian Department in Florida from his arrival in August of 1848 until October of 1849.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Mexican War, 1846-1848
Seminole
Seminole Indians -- Wars

Cultures:

Seminole

Types of Materials:

Letter books

Names:

Bowlegs, Billy, 1808?-1863 or 1864
United States. Office of Indian Affairs. Seminole Indian Agency

Container Listing

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|---------------|--|
| Box 1, Item 1 | Florida Seminole Agency: Letter Book and Account Current, 1850-1852, 1856 Image(s) Culture: Seminole |
| Box 1, Item 2 | Florida Seminole Agency: Letter Book and Journal of Operations, 1848-1856 Image(s) Culture: Seminole |
| Box 1, Item 3 | Monterrey, Mexico (War Department) and Florida Seminole Agency: Letter Book and Order Book, 1847-1856 Image(s) Culture: Seminole |