

JOSEPH L. BRENT PAPERS

Louisiana History
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p. 333-334

All of the documents in this group relate to the military service of Joseph Lancaster Brent. With the rank of major, he was ordnance officer for Major General John B. Magruder's division in Virginia in 1862. Brent later accompanied Major General Richard Taylor to Louisiana, where he served as chief of artillery and ordnance for the District of Western Louisiana and rose to the rank of colonel. After Taylor was transferred east of the Mississippi River in late 1864, Brent was assigned to duty as a brigadier general by General Edmund Kirby Smith, but this assignment was never confirmed by the Confederate Congress. Brent assumed command of a cavalry brigade operating in south Louisiana. In early 1865, he became commander of all cavalry forces in the state, including his old brigade, Colonel Isaac F. Harrison's brigade north of Red River, and various scout, outpost, and courier commands. The present arrangement of Brent's papers appears to have been established by Thomas W. Castleman.

PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS, 1862-1865.

Correspondence, reports, and orders from May 10, 1862, to May 25, 1865. Included in these papers are copies of reports and correspondence of Richard Taylor. These documents contain much valuable information on artillery operations and the Red River Campaign of 1864. 447 items; arranged chronologically. (Reels 8-9)

BRENT'S BRIGADE, 1864-1865.

Correspondence, reports, and orders pertaining to his command of a cavalry brigade and later of all cavalry units in south Louisiana from August 11, 1864, to May 30, 1865. 96 items; arranged chronologically. (Reel 9)

HARRISON'S BRIGADE, 1865.

Correspondence and reports pertaining to units of Colonel Isaac F. Harrison's brigade, which included the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Louisiana Cavalry regiments, from January 17-May 10, 1865. Includes some dispatches relating to a scout unit commanded by Lieutenant Henry W. Griffin. 87 items; arranged chronologically. (Reel 9)

2nd LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT, 1865 & UNDATED.

Reports, returns, correspondence, and orders from January 20-May 16, 1865, and undated. 187 items; arranged chronologically. (Reel 9)

3rd LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT, 1865.

Correspondence and reports from January 5-May 17, 1865. 68 items; arranged chronologically. (Reel 9)

5th LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT, 1865.

Reports, returns, and correspondence from March 31-May 13, 1865. 60 items; arranged chronologically. (Reel 10)

COMMANDS EAST OF THE ATCHAFALAYA RIVER, 1865.

Reports and correspondence of small commands on outpost and scouting duty east of the Atchafalaya River from January 14-May 18, 1865. 85 items; arranged chronologically. (Reel 10)

SCOUTS AND OUTPOSTS, 1864-1865.

Reports and correspondence of various commands doing scouting, outpost, and courier duty from August 15, 1864, to May 27, 1865. Includes December 1864 reports of the amount of corn found on various plantations and farms in south Louisiana. 109 items; arranged chronologically. (Reel 10)

MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS, 1864-1865.

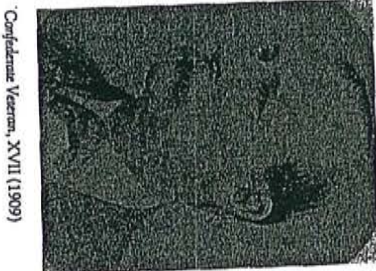
Correspondence and reports from September 15, 1864, to March 4, 1865, including a copy of a letter from General Robert E. Lee to General Edmund Kirby Smith. 5 items; arranged chronologically. (Reel 10)

MAIN SOURCES

Dougan, Michael B. *Confederate Arkansas*. University, Tex., 1976.
 Elmwood Cemetery Association of Memphis. *Charter, Rules, Regulations, and By-Laws of the Elmwood Cemetery Association of Memphis*. Memphis, 1874.
 Etnowood Cemetery Association. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas*. Chicago, Goodspeed Publishing Company, Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas. Chicago, 1890.

JOSEPH LANCASTER BRENT

Joseph Lancaster Brent was born on November 30, 1826, in Pomonkey, Charles County, Maryland, the son of William Leigh and Maria (Fenwick) Brent. His father, a lawyer and future congressman from Louisiana, was of an old Maryland family; his brother later served as attorney general of that state. Brent was reared in his native state and attended Georgetown University. After briefly practicing law in St. Martinville, Louisiana, in 1849 he moved out to California, settling in Los Angeles County. Brent was admitted to practice law there in 1850 and soon rose to high rank among California's lawyers, specializing in land claims. At one time he owned the land that is now the city of Pasadena.



Confederate Veteran, XVII (1909)

Brent served two terms in the California House, in 1856 and 1857. "Especially popular with the Mexican element," he became the Democratic leader in southern California.¹ Brent's memoirs (which cover his life from 1850 to 1862) explain the source of his political power—he represented the local Mexican-Americans in court, and they in turn followed his political advice: "I became so decidedly the leader in Los Angeles politics that . . . no one could be elected whom I did not support, and no one defeated whom I befriended."²

When the war started Brent sailed back to the South, but was arrested on the high seas, taken north, and paroled. In February, 1862, Brent reached Richmond, and at once was appointed captain on the staff of Major General John B. Magruder, commanding at Yorktown. On May 9, 1862, during the Peninsula campaign, Brent was promoted to major of artillery and served as Magruder's chief of ordnance. One source states that "devoted to work, his energy and administrative ability were felt in every direction."³ After the Seven Days' Battles he transferred to Louisiana, where Major General Richard Taylor (a close personal friend) appointed him chief of artillery in Taylor's District of Western Louisiana. In this post he worked won-

ders equipping and organizing the artillery of Taylor's orphan command. One exploit of Brent's was commanding two makeshift gunboats that in 1863 attacked and captured the Union ironclad *Indiamole*. On April 17, 1864, General E. Kirby Smith appointed Brent colonel of the newly reorganized artillery battalions of Taylor's army. In October, 1864, the command of a newly formed brigade of Louisiana cavalry in Taylor's army became vacant. The cavalry division's commander asked Brent, whom he knew to be an officer of "energy, gallantry, judgment and ability," to turn cavalryman and take charge of the brigade.⁴ On October 15, 1864, General Kirby Smith assigned Brent to command of the brigade, with the rank of brigadier general. The brigade guarded northern Louisiana against Union raids for the remainder of the war. Brent was one of three Confederate commissioners who negotiated the May 26, 1865, surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Department. On June 5, 1865, he was paroled as brigadier general.

After the war Brent lived in Baltimore until 1870, in Louisiana, and in Baltimore from 1888 on, working as a lawyer and a planter and serving behind the scenes as a power in the Louisiana Democratic party. Brent was elected to represent Ascension Parish in the Louisiana House in 1874 and 1886. General Brent married a daughter of Louisiana Congressman Duncan Kenner and by that marriage became the nephew-in-law of Generals Richard Taylor and Allen Thomas. General Brent died on November 27, 1905, in Baltimore, Maryland. He is buried in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore.

Brent is listed as a general in SHSP (with a November, 1864, date of commission), CMH, Wood, and Heitman, though not listed as a Kirby Smith appointment by Warner. The OR show him as "acting brigadier general" on December 31, 1864, the same designation as A. P. Bagby and other known Kirby Smith appointments, but the record of that appointment is not in the OR. The best proof of his being a general is the fact that after the war Brent applied for a general's pardon. In his application for pardon (which carried endorsements from, among others, the Union governors of Louisiana, Arizona, and California) he lists himself as a brigadier general at a time when he had every inducement not to do so.⁵

NOTES

1. Harris Newmark, *Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913* (Los Angeles, 1970), 47.
2. Joseph L. Brent, *Memoirs of the War Between the States* (N.p., 1940), 22.
3. See Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (1879; rpt. New York, 1955), 139.
4. General Simon B. Buckner to Brigadier General William Boggs, October 7, 1864, in Brent's Compiled Service Records of Confederate General and Staff Officers, National Archives.
5. After the war President Johnson issued a blanket pardon for the South, excepting several narrow categories of ex-rebels. The category that concerns us here is the one excluding from the general pardon (and thus from citizenship rights) Confederate military officers above the rank of colonel. Confederate generals, if they wished to regain their civil rights, had to apply to the president for an individual pardon. The pardon papers, still on file at the National Archives, make fascinating reading. The numerous assertions that, in 1861, the appli-

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JOSEPH L. BRENT COLLECTION

1001 BOX 1

- F.F. 1 5th LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT
Items 1-38 Mar.31 - Apr.29 1865
- F.F. 2 5th LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT
Items 39-60 May 1 - May 13 1865
- F.F. 3 2nd LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT
Items 1-44 Undated - Mar.31 1865
- F.F. 4 2nd LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT
Items 45-91 Apr.1 - Apr.15 1865
- F.F. 5 2nd LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT
Items 92-132 Apr.16 - Apr.31 1865
- F.F. 6 2nd LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT
Items 133-169 May 1 - May 17 1865

1002 BOX 2

- F.F. 7 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 1-31 May 10 - Dec.29 1862
- F.F. 8 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 32-87 Jan.1 - June 30 1863
- F.F. 9 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 88-141 July 2 - Dec.23 1863
- F.F. 10 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 142-177 Jan.8 - Apr.30 1864
- F.F. 11 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 178-224 May 1 - May 31 1864

,003 BOX 3

- F.F. 12 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 225-250 June 1 - June 30 1864
- F.F. 13 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 251-302 July 2 - Nov.18 1864
- F.F. 14 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 303a-307b Miscellaneous
- F.F. 15 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 308-363 Jan.11 - Mar.31 1865
- F.F. 16 PERSONAL AND BRIGADE PAPERS
Items 364-420 Apr.1 - May 25 1865

,004 BOX 4

- F.F. 17 BRENT'S BRIGADE
Items 1-58 Aug.11 1864 - Mar.31 1865
- F.F. 18 BRENT'S BRIGADE
Items 59-94 Apr.1 - May 30 1865
- F.F. 19 COMMANDS EAST OF THE ATCHAFALAYA RIVER
Items 1-49 Jan.14 - Apr.31 1865
- F.F. 20 COMMANDS EAST OF THE ATCHAFALAYA RIVER
Items 50-81 May 1 - May 18 1865

,005 BOX 5

- F.F. 21 SCOUTS AND OUTPOSTS
Items 1-57 Aug.15 1864 - Apr.19 1865
- F.F. 22 SCOUTS AND OUTPOSTS
Items 58-109 Apr.20 - May 27 1865

1005 cont'd

- F.F. 23 3rd LOUISIANA CAVALRY REGIMENT
 Items 1-70 Jan.5 - May 17 1865
- F.F. 24 HARRISON'S BRIGADE
 Items 1-86 Jan.17 - May 10 1865
- F.F. 25 MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS
 Items 1a-4 Sept.15 1864 - Mar.24 1865
- F.F. 26 3 Miscellaneous items
 (Not found on Microfilm)
 (Possibly from another collection)

Old
Index

2012.005

BOX #21:

BRENT COLLECTION
9 File - Folders

- FOLDER #1; 60 pieces
- FOLDER #2: 187 pieces
- FOLDER #3: 447 pieces (includes several multipage documents counted as one)
- FOLDER #4 96 pieces (a few glued together)
- FOLDER #5 85 Pieces
- FOLDER #6 109 pieces
- FOLDER #7 68 pieces
- FOLDER #8 87 pieces
- FOLDER #9 5 pieces

*(5 folders
in #3)*

~~Moved the following Master Rolls: 0~~

ITEMS MISSING FROM THE JOSEPH L. BRENT COLLECTION

1. Item 1 - Box 2, F.F. 7 (Letter dated May 10, 1862)
2. Item 128 - Box 2, F.F. 9 (Letter dated Nov.24, 1863)
3. Item 129 - Box 2, F.F. 9 (Letter dated Nov.22, 1863)
4. Item 239 - Box 3, F.F. 12 (Letter dated June 9, 1864)
5. Item 23 - Box 4, F.F. 17 (Letter dated March 6, 1865)
6. Item 93 - Box 4, F.F. 18 (Letter dated May 22, 1865)
7. Item 38 - Box 4, F.F. 20 (Newspaper clipping - April 1865)
8. Item 4 - Box 5, F.F. 25 (Letter dated March 24, 1865)