



**Edward Laight Wells papers, 1858-1924**  
**SCHS 1136.00**  
**Containers 11/519-521C**

**Creator:** Wells, Edward Laight.

**Description:** 2.5 linear ft.

**Biographical/Historical Note:** Charleston, S.C. merchant and author. Born in New York, N.Y., he was the son of Thomas Lawrence Wells (b. 1800), a lawyer. Edward L. Wells moved to the South, where he became an advocate of Southern nationalism. In 1863 he enlisted in Company K, 4th S.C. Cavalry (Charleston Light Dragoons). After the war he became a cotton broker in Charleston. He died in 1917. His wife, Anna Mason Smith Wells, died in 1924.

**Scope and Content:** Papers chiefly consist of manuscripts of fiction and nonfiction writings by Edward L. Wells.

Fiction (unpublished) consists of handwritten and typed manuscripts of novels, novellas, and short stories including "Betsa" (98 p.); "Henry Charwood" (title or main character, 364 p.), a novel about a young Northern physician's experiences during the Civil War and afterwards; "Lady Sunshine" (ca. 130 p.), a love story; "Runnymede: A Story of the Old and New South" (272 p.); "The Voodoo Doctor: A Story of Reconstruction in South Carolina" (140 p.), written under the pseudonym Quentin Saxon; "L'Amour a Deux" (18 p.), a short story written under the pseudonym E.L. Sllew; "The Camel and the Needle's Eye"; "Fair and Foul in Mexico" (ca. 20 p.); "Full Fathom Five" (16 p.); "A Mexican Mystery" (8 p.); "My Rosary"; "Temptations" (47 p.); and "The Two Duchesses" (12 p.). There are also manuscripts of poems by Wells.

Nonfiction consists of handwritten and typed manuscripts of books and articles including "Hampton and His Cavalry in '64" (105 p.), with related correspondence (1898-1902) regarding publication and sales of the book, a contract (1899), clippings of reviews, and a pamphlet (1907) "Hampton and Reconstruction" by E.L. Wells; "The United States in Evolution, or Revolution? 1776-1861" (1908?), a study of tariffs and sectionalism, alternately titled "How the Tariff Chain was Forged"; a history of the Charleston Light Dragoons, published in 1888, with related correspondence (1888); an article "Who Burnt Columbia?" (1882); an article concerning Justice David Davis and the Electoral Commission of 1877, with related letters (1913-1915); a personal narrative about the Charleston (S.C.) earthquake of 1886; articles and a letter (1897) about Wade Hampton and his monument; "A Morning Call on General Kilpatrick," an article published in 1884; "Louisiana's Influence on American History"; and "A New Psychic Hypothesis" (n.d.), about the subconscious.

In his memoirs (1904-1911; 18 p.), Wells writes of his family, his sympathies for the Southern cause, the New York Draft Riot of 1863 (in which he witnessed "many negroes run down in the streets, & killed"), his decision to fight for the South, his service in the Charleston

Light Dragoons, and his life after the war in Charleston as a businessman. Among his papers are also clippings, including obituaries; correspondence (1884-1917); and a few war records, including a note (19 March 1865) from Gen. Wade Hampton commending Wells and several other soldiers for "conspicuous gallantry."

**Preferred Citation:** Wells, Edward Laight, b. 1839. Edward Laight Wells papers, 1858-1924. (1136.00) South Carolina Historical Society.

**Note:** Photographs have been removed to the SCHS photograph collection.

**Search terms:**

Hampton, Wade, 1818-1902.

Wells, Edward Laight, b. 1839.

Wells family.

Confederate States of America. Army. Charleston Light Dragoons.

Confederate States of America. Army. Hampton Legion.

Draft Riot, New York, N.Y., 1863.

Reconstruction (U.S. history, 1865-1877)

Sectionalism (United States)

Subconsciousness.

Tariff -- United States.

Charleston (S.C.) -- Earthquake, 1886.

Columbia (S.C.) -- History -- Burning, 1865.

South Carolina -- History.

Southern States -- Literature.

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865.

United States -- Politics and government.

Articles.

Clippings.

Histories.

Letters (correspondence)

Manuscripts.

Novels.

Poems.

Reminiscences.

Short stories.

Authors.

Historians.

**Container listing:**

**11/519-520 Wells, Edward L. Sr., 1839-1917**

**Longer fiction, ca. 1890-1915. 1 ft.**

Charleston author. Typescripts, notes, holograph versions, and fragments of WELLS's novellas or longer fiction including "Betsa" regarding a woman of mixed Indian blood who marries a stern New England preacher in rural NY only to lose him to a fierce battle in the War of 1812;

untitled Henry Charwood novel regarding young Yankee at a southern plantation on the eve of the Civil War and later, during the war and reconstruction. "Lady Sunshine," "Runnymede," and "The VooDoo Doctor," all contain similar characters, plots, episodes and political outlook regarding the story of a young Yankee Doctor who visits a southern plantation in 1860, hunts, falls in love, returns to the North to care for the civil war wounded, is wounded and returns to his fiancée and runs into problems with ruthless bureaucrats and strange forces during Reconstruction.

**11/521/1-5 Wells, Edward L. Sr., 1839-1917**

**Short fiction, ca. 1890-1915. 20 items**

Charleston author. Typescripts, holograph, early and final versions of Wells' short fiction, some of which are the same story with different names including, "L'Amour Adeux, A Nature Study," "The Camel & the Needles Eye," "Coincidences," "Dinner Over, The Ladies Retired...", "Fair and Foul in Mexico," "Full Fathom Five," "Its an Ill Wind that Blows Nobody Good," "L'Incendiaire Charmante," "A Mexican Mystery," "My Rosary," "A Subject from Two Points of View," "Temptation," "Taming a Shrew," and "The Two Duchess'." Stories regarding marital adventures of Southern artist in Rome and how bad interests try to corrupt his loves, adventures in Mexican Mining Camps including romance, murder, marauders during 1850s, supernatural stories, a sea drowning drama and a saga of upstate NY around 1812 with half breeds, Indians, and preachers. (See Betsa mss. 11/519/1-2)

**11/521A/1-8 Wells, Edward L. Sr., 1839-1917**

**Historical non-fiction, 1899-1907. Approx 50 items**

Charleston historian, author. Typescript, holograph version, notes, letters for Wells' Hampton and His Calvary in '64 (BF Johnson Co., 1899, Richmond VA). Biography of Wade Hampton I, mostly regarding Hampton's Confederate Campaigns in 1864 (See also 51-180 for research material on book). Also letters from publisher, many newspaper reviews and publishers advertisement for Hampton and Reconstruction. The State Co., Columbia SC (1907).

**11/521A-521B Wells, Edward L. Sr., 1839-1917**

**Historical non-fiction, ca. 1908. Approx ¾ ft**

Charleston historian, author. Typescript and holograph versions with notes, letters, and fragments of Wells' unpublished and long historical works: "The US in Evolution or Revolution? 1776-1861" (1908) and "How the Tariff-Chain was Forged" regarding evolutionary processes effecting the US, tariffs and their effect on US politics, also discussion of many of the incidents that led to the Civil War. Subjects discussed in the mss and notes include John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, Dred Scott, Charles Sumner, Daniel Webster, Texas, taxes, US expansionism, slavery compromises, slavery and political elections.

**11/521B-521C Wells, Edward L. Sr, 1839-1917**

**Non-fiction writings, 1882-1917. Approx 75 items**

Charleston historian, author. Typescript, holograph mss., correspondence, notes, news clippings of Wells' articles for magazines and newspapers including an article and much detailed correspondence with members of the Charleston Light Dragoon's Civil War corps (1888); "Who Burn't Columbia," (1882); published in March 1882 Southern Historical Society Paper; "Justice David Davis and the Electoral Commission of 1877," (1915); The Charleston Earthquake of

1886; Wade Hampton Monument and other Hampton miscellany; “A Morning Call on General Kilpatrick” regarding civil war attack by W. Hampton (1884, published in March 1884 Southern Historical Society Papers); “Louisiana’s influence on American History” (n.d.); “Why Do Americans Sympathize with the South African Republics,” (1900) regarding Boer Wars; “Southern Literature as a National Force;” and an article regarding General Joseph Wheeler. Also reviews, miscellany and much poetry of Wells.