



SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Delaware Kemper papers, 1856-1899 SCHS# 0617.00

Description: 0.5 linear ft. (1 box)

Biographical/Historical Note: Delaware Kemper was born in Virginia to William S. Kemper and Sarah Richards Humphreys Kemper. He and his brother Koscuisko Kemper were, like their father, educators, and taught at a preparatory school for boys in Alexandria, Virginia, before the war. When the War Between the States began, Delaware Kemper enlisted in the Alexandria Light Artillery, which was mustered into Confederate service in April 1861. Captain Delaware Kemper and Captain David L. Smoot were the commanders. This unit fought at First Manassas (or Bull Run) and was later merged into the 18th Battalion Virginia Heavy Artillery. In the summer of 1862 Kemper was promoted to the rank of major of artillery, and in 1863 he attained the rank of lieutenant colonel. In April 1863 he was assigned to duty in the Department of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. After the war Kemper returned to Virginia and taught at Hampden-Sidney (now Hampden-Sydney) College. In 1871 he married Francis (Fannie) Snowden Hay of Camden, South Carolina. In the 1880s Kemper was appointed as U.S. Consul to Amoy, China, by President Grover Cleveland. He died in June 1899 and is buried in Alexandria, Virginia.

Scope and Content: Papers consist of correspondence, diaries, military records, papers relating to Delaware Kemper's consular service in China, and miscellaneous items.

Wartime correspondence and orders, 1861-1864, includes a letter (20 June 1861) from Kemper to his mother mainly relating to the Battle of Vienna (a minor engagement on June 17) and the participation of Kemper's Battery in it, with mentions of casualties, Col. Maxcy Gregg, and praise for Kemper by Gen. M. L. Bonham and others ("They call me 'Duke of Vienna.'") Kemper's letter of 25 July 1861 reports on this battle. A note dated 7 August 1861 asks Kemper to accept a palmetto wreath "as a token of appreciation from some of Carolina's Daughters." An official piece of correspondence dated 8 July 1862 is Kemper's appointment as Major of Artillery. A letter, 13 February 1862, indicates that he is recovering from a wounded arm. Orders from Gen. Beauregard on 11 April 1863 assign Kemper to duty in the 2nd Military District and direct him to report to Gen. Johnson Hagood at Adam's Run. Of note is a note to Kemper, 20 July 1863, from Edmund Ruffin inquiring about Kemper's Battery firing on the fleeing enemy at Cub Run (during the First Battle of Manassas, or Bull Run). Letters of December 1863 and early January 1864 chiefly pertain to an expedition against enemy steamers (the Pawnee and

Marblehead) in the Stono River near Legareville. Letters of February 1864 relate to operations on John's Island and supplies for artillery batteries.

Kemper's postwar correspondence (1865-1878) includes a letter (20 April 1867) of R. E. Withers to Dr. Robert L. Dabney concerning First Manassas; and a partial letter (28 April 1869) from Withers (?) to Dabney concerning Gen. Beauregard at First Manassas. A letter, 2 June 1875, to Kemper from Gen. Edward P. Alexander pertains to Alexander's published history of Longstreet's Corps which mentions Kemper's Battery. There is also a letter (25 October 25) to Major Richard Gantt Hay from Kemper at Hampden-Sydney College in which he writes of his wife Fannie (Hay's niece) and mentions the "evil days...of oppression & carpet-bagger" after the war in South Carolina and the end of the Reconstruction government there.

A pocket diary dating February through August 1862 contains entries relating to the weather, as well as personal and military affairs. Of note is a description (5 May) of the Battle of Williamsburg; reflections (9 May) on the deaths of soldiers from Alexandria, including Kemper's "Uncle Jack"; fighting at Savage's Station (29 June); reflections on a lady who "promised to love me & be mine" (27 July); his father's illness (5 August); and fighting at Warrenton Springs Ford (26 August).

A second pocket diary principally dates from September 1863 to November 1864, with a few later entries. It begins on 11 September 1863 with Major Kemper's arrival in Charleston (S.C.). The diary is interspersed with numerous literary quotations, and most entries are brief, noting visits to James Island, Summerville, Columbia, Legareville, Adam's Run, Pocotaligo, etc. An entry for 16 December 1863 mentions an expedition on which Kemper was "superseded" in command on 20 December. An entry for 25 December concerns an attack on the ship Marblehead. In 1864, Kemper writes of "a negro cook of Gen. Gillmore" who was captured when he came ashore from the ship Pawnee by a "negro named Paul belonging to some of Maj. Jenkins' cavalry." The cook informed him of casualties on the Marblehead. On 5 February, Kemper writes of receiving photographs of his parents, whom he describes admiringly and affectionately. An entry of 11 February 1864 mentions fighting on John's Island. On 3 March, Kemper attends a court martial. Entries of May and June 1864 mention trips to Charleston and Richmond, and his return to Charleston. Some of the last entries in the diary begin with an account of Gen. Johnston's surrender in April 1865 and Kemper's return to Virginia, where he finds his mother ill. Subsequently he describes her last illness and death on 5 June 1865. "Thus ended a life beautified by the most earnest but unostentatious piety, in a death that was sublime in its patience, its resignation to God's will & its perfect trust in the Redeemer. God help us who are left." An entry added on 9 May 1886 relating to the reburial of his mother at "the family graveyard" at the Point, Culpeper County, Virginia. The final pages of the diary consist of "Notes on Ordnance."

Military records include Kemper's appointment (16 January 1861) as captain in the 2nd Regiment of Artillery, Virginia Militia; and two small folded notes (1861) to Kemper giving the parole (password) and countersign to be used by his troops, one of which is signed by Gen. Gregg's military secretary, A. C. Haskell; and the other, signed by Gen. Bonham's adjutant, which gives

the password as “Kemper” and the countersign as “Vienna.” A hand-drawn map (1863?) of Charleston harbor and the surrounding islands and marshlands shows the location of forts, batteries, and the “Yankee Fleet.” A printed diagram (no date), printed at Columbia (S.C.), depicts a structure described as Haxo’s System (an 18th century style of fortification named for Nicholas Benoit Haxo). There are also ordnance records, 1863, including tables of artillery ranges; and Kemper’s certificate of oath (1865).

Papers (1894-1897) relating to Delaware Kemper’s consular service at Amoy, China, include multiple certificates of his appointment as consul; related correspondence; and minutes of a meeting of the “Consular Body” at Amoy in 1897.

Miscellaneous items include a pocket diary (1856) recounting a trip to Niagra Falls, given by Lottie Kemper to her brother Delaware; a program (1872) for an anniversary celebration at Hampden-Sidney (now Hampden-Sydney) College; an advertising sheet (1885) for the book *Where Men Only Dare to Go* (about Parker’s Battery, Virginia Light Artillery) which features an endorsement by Kemper; and a resolution (1899) from the R. E. Lee Camp, Confederate Veterans, Alexandria, Va., concerning the death of Delaware Kemper. Also of note is a photograph (ca. 1868?) of the “Radical Members” of the South Carolina Legislature, with a typewritten list of the names of these “63 members of the reconstructed South Carolina Legislature,” noting whether they are “white” or “colored.”

Cite As: Kemper, Delaware, 1833-1899. Delaware Kemper papers, 1856-1899. (0617.00) South Carolina Historical Society.

Search terms:

Beauregard, G. T. (Gustave Toutant), 1818-1893.
Kemper, Delaware, 1833-1899.
Ruffin, Edmund, 1794-1865 -- Correspondence.
Confederate States of America. Army -- Officers.
Confederate States of America. Army. Virginia Heavy Artillery Battalion, 18th.
Pawnee (Ship)
African American legislators -- South Carolina.
Bull Run, First Battle of, Va., 1861.
Consuls.
Fortification -- Confederate States of America.
Ordnance -- Artillery.
Reconstruction (U.S. history, 1865-1877) -- South Carolina.
Williamsburg, Battle of, Williamsburg, Va., 1862.
Alexandria (Va.)
Charleston (S.C.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Maps.
Johns Island (S.C.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865.
Niagra Falls (N.Y. and Ont.)
South Carolina -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865.
Stono River (S.C.)
Virginia -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States -- Foreign relations -- China.
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Artillery operations, Confederate.