

Braxton Bragg Papers 1833-1879



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Introduction

Braxton Bragg was born in 1817 in Warrenton, Carolina. He entered the U.S. Military Academy in 1833 and graduated four years later with the rank of second lieutenant. Bragg served with distinction during the Mexican War, particularly at Monterey and Buena Vista. In 1849 he married Elise Brooks Ellis, and he resigned his commission in 1856 to farm Bivouac Plantation in Louisiana. In March 1861, Bragg was commissioned brigadier general in the Confederate Army and given command of the Army of Pensacola. He saw no military action for eight months but earned a reputation during this period as an excellent organizer and a strict disciplinarian.

In April 1862, Bragg headed north to support General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Mississippi. Bragg fought aggressively at Shiloh and was commissioned general after that battle. In June, Bragg took command of the Army of Tennessee and during the late summer moved north into Kentucky to prevent General Don C. Buell from uniting his forces at Louisville. Bragg captured Mumfordsville and had succeeded in blocking Buell's path when he decided to move to Frankfort to establish a Confederate governorship and to encourage Kentuckians to join the campaign. Buell quickly united his forces at Louisville and engaged Bragg at Perryville. Bragg fought to what most considered a draw but then inexplicitly retreated across much of the ground that he had gained back into Tennessee.

Two months later Bragg defeated General William S. Rosecrans at Murfreesboro but failed to exploit his victory. Despite apparent public dissatisfaction with Bragg, Confederate President Jefferson Davis kept him in command. With Rosecrans in pursuit, Bragg was forced from Tullahoma and Chattanooga during the summer of 1863. But at Chickamauga on September 19, Bragg attacked

Rosecrans and won a notable victory, although he again failed to follow up his offensive. The Federals regrouped, and General Ulysses S. Grant attacked Bragg on November 23 at Chattanooga. Bragg was forced to retreat to Dalton, Georgia, and on November 30 he resigned his command.

In February 1864, Davis asked Bragg to become his military adviser. Bragg joined Davis in Richmond and served in that capacity until October, when Davis appointed him to command at Wilmington, North Carolina. Bragg pursued this command with little success as the Confederate military position disintegrated on all fronts. After the war, Bragg served as a civil and railroad engineer in Alabama and Texas. He died in Galveston, Texas, on September 27, 1876.

The *Braxton Bragg Papers, 1833-1879* consist mainly of Bragg's personal and headquarters papers from the period of the Civil War. Included is material written to, by, or about Bragg including both personal and official letters, drafts, reminiscences, journals, clippings, telegrams, records, circulars, orders, and reports.

The collection is divided into the three following series: **Series I: Headquarters and Personal Papers**, dates from Bragg's service in the Confederate Army. There are also a few papers from the Mexican War and others relating to Bragg's postwar career as a civil engineer. The papers, arranged in chronological order, include personal and official letters, telegrams, records, reports, orders, circulars, drafts, and memoranda.

Series II, Miscellaneous Files, consists of papers from the Medical Department of the Army of Pensacola, copies of papers found on Union Colonel Ulrich Dahlgren relating to a plan to assassinate Confederate President Jefferson Davis, letters and memoranda to Mrs. Bragg from 1875 to 1879, the journal of George Brent (Chief of Orders,

Army of Tennessee under Bragg), Dr. S. H. Stout's reminiscences of Bragg, various undated notes and drafts, and mounted and unmounted newspaper clippings relating to Bragg.

Series III, Bound Letter Copy Books, consists of five volumes. The first includes letters and telegrams from Bragg's Pensacola command (March 10, 1861 to January 21, 1862) and letters and telegrams from General Samuel Jones's Mobile command (February 6, 1862 to July 10, 1862). The second contains letters and telegrams from Bragg's Army of Tennessee (January 1, 1863 to August 20, 1863). The third contains letters, telegrams, orders, and reports from the Army of Tennessee under Bragg (February 22, 1863 to December 3, 1863), under Lieutenant General William J. Hardee (December 3, 1863 to December 24, 1863), and under General Joseph E. Johnston (December 24, 1863 to March 29, 1864). The fourth contains letters, telegrams, orders, circulars, and a list of staff officers from September 1863, plus a letter from Bragg to Adjutant General Samuel Cooper dated November 30, 1863. The fifth contains letters, telegrams, orders, and circulars relating to the administration of North Carolina to the end of the war.

The Bragg Papers provide an extraordinarily detailed view of Braxton Bragg's Confederate military career and of the Civil War actions in which he was engaged, notably the Battles of Shiloh, Murfreesboro, Perryville, and Missionary Ridge. Bragg's voluminous correspondence with other Confederate commanders and government officials (see Index of Letters for a selected list of correspondents) provides valuable insight into the mechanism of reporting and conducting military actions. In particular, the correspondence serves to illuminate the conflicting attitudes about Bragg's aptitude as a commander and

offers a contemporary assessment of his successes. As such, it offers a corrective to the often negative historical assessment of his performance. Also of note in the correspondence are the letters between Bragg and his wife which offer a highly personal view of a military commander's life.

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Roll Cont. Folder
No. No. No.

Series I: Headquarters and Personal Papers

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | Beginning of the War, June 1, 1833-
April 30, 1861, consisting mostly of
copies of Bragg's reports to Adjutant
General Samuel Cooper and dispatches
between Bragg and Secretary of War
Leroy P. Walker. Also includes a letter
from Union Major Henry I. Hunt and a
letter from Confederate President
Jefferson Davis (April 3, 1861)
indicating his willingness to start the
war. Includes four items from
1833 to 1860. |
| | | 2 | Defense of Pensacola, May 1, 1861-
November 30, 1861, including several
letters to and from Mrs. Bragg and
Bragg's draft report on the November
22 bombardment of Pensacola. |
| | | 3 | Battle of Shiloh, January 2, 1862-
June 29, 1862, including two letters
from Secretary of War Judah P.
Benjamin transmitting President
Davis's orders and plans for the Army
of Tennessee. Also includes Bragg's |

Roll Cont. Folder

No. No. No.

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|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | 1 | 3 | and several subordinates' reports on the Battle of Shiloh, and several letters from Mrs. Bragg. |
| 2 | | 4 | Invasion of Kentucky, July 4, 1862-September 24, 1862, including several letters from Brigadier General Nathan B. Forrest dealing with his cavalry command and a captured letter written by General Pierre G. T. Beauregard describing a plan for the invasion of the Ohio Valley (September 2). |
| | | 5 | Battle of Perryville, September 24, 1862-November 1, 1862, including reports on the battle by several of Bragg's staff members. |
| | | 6 | Battle of Murfreesboro, November 14, 1862-January 16, 1863, including a memorandum from Bragg concerning their battle strategy for Murfreesboro and the post battle reports of several of Bragg's officers. Also includes several replies to a letter Bragg sent to his commanders asking their opinion of him and of his effectiveness. |

Roll No.	Cont. No.	Folder No.	
2	1	7	Aftermath, January 17, 1863-March 9, 1863, including General Joseph E. Johnston's report to Davis on the state of Bragg's command (February 3) and a draft of Bragg's report on the Battle of Murfreesboro.
3	2	8	Aftermath (continued). March 11, 1863-May 31, 1863, including Bragg's appendix to Major General John Breckenridge's report on Murfreesboro, Bragg's circular to his general officers requesting information about meetings called by General Leonidas Polk at Bardstown and Perryville, replies to Bragg's circular, and Bragg's report on Perryville and on Polk's command.
		9	Tullahoma to Chattanooga, June 1, 1863-August 29, 1863, consisting mainly of telegrams and special orders, including several letters and telegrams from Lieutenant General William J. Hardee.
		10	Battle of Chickamauga, September 1, 1863-October 31, 1863, including various orders and telegrams from before and after the battle. Also

Roll Cont. Folder

No. No. No.

3 2 10 includes Polk's explanation (September 28) of his failure to attack during the early morning of the second day of battle, a letter from General Robert H. Chilton, Chief of Staff for General Robert E. Lee, congratulating Bragg for himself and Lee (October 1), and a defense of Bragg written by Colonel John B. Sale (October 15).

4 2 11 Chattanooga (Missionary Ridge) - Bragg Resigns Command, November 1, 1863-December 31, 1863, including several officers' reports on Chickamauga, Bragg's draft report on Missionary Ridge, a telegram from Adjutant General Cooper affirming Bragg's request to be relieved, the draft of a letter from Bragg to Davis in which Bragg accepts responsibility for Chattanooga ("justly disparaging to me as a commander"), and Bragg's official report on Chickamauga (December 28). The folder also includes a draft of Bragg's notes on his career and various letters of consolation for the loss of his command.

Roll No.	Cont. No.	Folder No.	
4	2	12	“Commander in Chief of the Confederate Forces,” January 3, 1864-April 30, 1864, consisting primarily of correspondence between Bragg, at Confederate Headquarters in Richmond, and Confederate officers in Alabama and Georgia. Also includes three letters from Major General John B. Hood in regard to General Johnston’s tactics against General William T. Sherman.
		13	Adviser to President Davis, Richmond, Virginia, May 1, 1864-July 31, 1864, consisting of detailed accounts (mostly telegrams) of the Meadow Bridge Road battles (May 11, May 12), plus Bragg’s notes (written in third person) on his “service in the cause of the Confederacy after leaving the Army of Tennessee in December 1863.”
5	3	14	Richmond Headquarters, Wilmington Command, August 1864-December 3, 1864, including a letter from President Davis putting Bragg in command at Wilmington, North Carolina, and several long letters from Bragg’s friend Colonel Sale.

Roll No.	Cont. No.	Folder No.	
5	3	15	Bombardment of Fort Fisher, December 4, 1864-January 2, 1865, including four officer reports (December 29) and a ten-page report by General Gail Whiting (December 30).
		16	Fall of Fort Fisher, January 3, 1865-January 31, 1865, including various reports on the fall of Fort Fisher and Bragg's report (January 29).
		17	Fall of Fort Anderson and Withdrawal from Wilmington, February 2, 1865-February 28, 1865, containing a note from General Lee directing Bragg to destroy all cotton, tobacco and naval stores, and several telegrams concerning the handling of Federal prisoners.
6	3	18	Miscellaneous Papers, March 1865-August 1876, including Bragg's final wartime letter to Davis (March 26, 1865) and various papers concerning Bragg's career as a civil engineer after the war.

Roll Cont. Folder
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Series II: Miscellaneous Files

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| 6 | 3 | 19 | Medical Department, Army of Pensacola, April 17, 1861-February 26, 1862, consisting of papers from the Medical Department of the Army of Pensacola. |
| | | 20 | Copies of papers found on Colonel Ulrich Dahlgren, March 4, 1864, including a letter describing Dahlgren's plan to burn Richmond and assassinate President Davis and his cabinet. |
| | | 21 | Letters and Memoranda to Mrs. Bragg, 1875-1879, consisting primarily of documents relating to Bragg's funeral. |
| 6 | 4 | 22 | Journal, October 1, 1862-December 2, 1863, of George Brent, covering his service as Chief of Orders Department, Army of Tennessee (under Bragg). Eleven pages out of 70, September 8, 1863-October 28, 1863, written by another hand. |
| | | 23 | Dr. S. H. Stout, reminiscences of General Braxton Bragg, manuscript dated December 17, 1876. The |

Roll Cont. Folder

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|---|---|----|--|
| 6 | 4 | 23 | reminiscences of Dr. Samuel H. Stout, medical director, Army of Tennessee. |
| | | 24 | Notes and Fragments, undated, consisting of various short notes, autographs, and reports of troop strength. |
| | | 25 | Newspaper Clippings, January, 1862-December, 1863, including mounted and unmounted clippings of news reports, editorials, and letters to the editor about Bragg. |
| | | 26 | —, March, 1864- October, 1877, including mounted and unmounted clippings of news reports, editorials, letters to the editor, and eulogies. |

Series III: Bound Letter Copy Books

Roll

Volume

No.

No.

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|---|---|---|
| 7 | 1 | Letter Book, Pensacola and Mobile Commands, March 10, 1861-July 10, 1862, containing letters and telegrams from Bragg's Pensacola command, March 10, 1861-January 21, 1862, and letters from General Samuel Jones's Mobile command, February 6, 1862-July 10, 1862. |
|---|---|---|

Roll No.	Volume No.	
7	2	—, Headquarters, Army of Tennessee, January 1, 1863-August 20, 1863, containing letters and telegrams from Bragg's Army of Tennessee.
8	3	Letter and General Service Book, Headquarters, Army of Tennessee, February 22, 1863-March 29, 1864, containing letters, telegrams, orders, and reports from the headquarters of the Army of Tennessee, February 22, 1863 - December 3, 1863 under Bragg, December 3, 1863-December 24, 1863 under Lieutenant General Jillian J. Hardee, and December 24, 1863-March 29, 1864 under General Joseph E. Johnston.
	4	Letter and General Service Book, Headquarters, Army of Tennessee, September 8, 1863-November 30, 1863, containing letters, telegrams, orders, circulars, and a list of staff officers, all from September 1863. Also includes a letter from Bragg to Adjutant General Cooper describing the Battle of Missionary Ridge, dated November 30, 1863.

Roll No.	Volume No.	
8	5	Letter and General Service Book, Headquarters, Department of North Carolina, December 21, 1864-April 10, 1865, containing letters, telegrams, orders, and circulars relating to the administration of North Carolina to the end of the War. Removed from MSS.2152.

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