



State of Tennessee  
Department of State  
Tennessee State Library and Archives

Provisional Army of Tennessee Records  
1861

Record Group 4

---

COLLECTION SUMMARY

**Creator:**

Tennessee. Provisional Army.

**Inclusive Dates:**

1861

**Scope & Content:**

Record Group 4, the Records of the Provisional Army of Tennessee, contains .5 cubic feet of material and five volumes outlining the creation of the Provisional Army of Tennessee. Although the records are fragmentary, they reflect some aspects of the early years of the Civil War, and the formation of the future massive Army of Tennessee. The Provisional Army of Tennessee records have been separated from the Confederate States of America, Army of Tennessee Collection.

The correspondence is dated primarily from May to July, 1861, and the general correspondence is arranged alphabetically by the correspondent. Included in the collection are letters to and from Generals S. R. Anderson, Richard G. Fain, and Felix K. Zollicoffer. Also comprising part of the records is General R. C. Foster's letter book (Box 4). Subjects in the correspondence include raising and arming troops, commissary supplies, troop movements, Union sentiment in East Tennessee, the physical condition of the troops, and other related matters.

Medical records include correspondence, inventories of supplies, medicines, rations, requisitions, and reports of sick and wounded patients. Unfortunately, many of the records have been "sampled," so little remains of this interesting aspect of the war. One volume of medical records (Box 2) contains similar

information. One document contains Governor Harris's appointment of surgeons for the army.

The Military Board of the State of Tennessee records (Box 3) include letters, orders, copies of Telegrams, bond payments, contracts, appointments, endorsements, cavalry equipment codes, purchase requisitions, and other assorted items. Also included in the record group are two volumes of telegrams and other correspondence sent by the Military Board of the State of Tennessee. Telegrams (Box 5) sent by the Military Board are dated April 27, 1861-October 12, 1861. Outgoing correspondence (Box 5) sent by the Military Board is dated April 29, 1861-December 23, 1861. These volumes have been even though they contain documents from after the transfer of command to the Confederates on July 31, 1861. The two latter volumes were removed from the Virginia Campbell Johns Papers, 1858-1862 (Acc. No. 1990-292).

**Physical Description/Extent:**

.5 cubic feet  
5 volumes

**Accession/Record Group Number:**

RG 4

**Language:**

English

**Permanent Location:**

RG 4

**Repository:**

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243-0312

**Administrative/Biographical History**

Governor Isham Harris of Tennessee was pivotal in the foundation of the Army of Tennessee. In early 1861 Harris moved Tennessee away from the Union, and established the command structure for the Provisional Army of Tennessee. The Provisional Army was very well organized, and became the foundation of the Army of Tennessee. When it was transferred to Confederate command, officially July 31, 1861, it contained "24 regiments, 10 artillery batteries, an Engineer Corps, Quartermaster and Ordnance departments and an Ordnance Bureau"<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Connelly, Thomas Lawrence. *Army of the Heartland: the Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967.

As Confederate authority was not established in the state until July, until then Harris had the responsibilities of defense. In May, the state army was still in the process of being organized and was in no condition for such defense. The state militia had been abolished in 1857, and as late as January 1861, Harris reported that no military organization existed in the state. Thus the Governor would have to build a state army to guard territory which had declared itself under Confederate military jurisdiction.

The problems of the new army were many. The first problem was the shortage of arms. By May 1, 1861, 70 regiments had enlisted and the Military Board predicted that 25,000 more would volunteer in May and June. Harris complained that the raising of troops was no problem, but that the state could not arm even the token regiments which had volunteered. In a show of limited support, the Confederate government eventually sent 4,000 muskets to Tennessee.

Another issue was the differing viewpoints of the Governor and his generals. The commanding Generals S.R. Anderson and Gideon J. Pillow had differing viewpoints concerning military strategies, troop deployments and overweening egos. Even so, Harris continued to wield strong influence upon the military situation in the west. The Governor's first move was to commit firmly the state army to the defense of the Mississippi River, while he neglected the defense of the Cumberland and the Tennessee Rivers. In May and June 1861, Harris concentrated 15,000 men in those forts still under construction: Forts Harris, Wright and Pillow, and the Memphis defenses. Fewer than 4,000 troops guarded the valuable supply depot at Nashville, and only a small post was maintained at Knoxville in East Tennessee.

It was one of the most well-organized in the South by the time the Confederate States of America assumed control in July 1861. Early in the war, the army was stationed in northern Tennessee, tasked with protecting the border succumbing to the Union at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in February 1862. Despite Harris' organizational acumen, he incorrectly assumed Kentucky's neutrality throughout the war and did not exert enough time or money fortifying the Tennessee-Kentucky border from invasion.

General Robert Coleman Foster III was born in Nashville, Tennessee on September 12, 1818. He was the son of Ephraim Foster, an attorney, State Representative, Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives, and United States Senator. His grandfather, Robert Coleman Foster, was a state representative, Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives, state senator, and Speaker of the Senate. He was an attorney in Nashville before joining the 1<sup>st</sup> Tennessee Volunteer Infantry in the Mexican-American War. After the war he was elected attorney general of the Sixth Judicial District, serving from 1847 to 1852. He was appointed brigadier general of the middle division of the Provisional Army of Tennessee by Governor Isham Harris on May 9, 1861.

However, after the transfer of the army under Confederate command, Foster was not offered a commission in the Confederate army. He returned to Nashville to practice law, and was elected recorder of the city. He died, destitute, on December 28, 1871.

## **Organization/Arrangement of Materials**

Contents of Box 1 are arranged alphabetically.

## **Conditions of Access and Use**

### **Restrictions on Access:**

No restrictions

### **Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:**

While the Tennessee State Library and Archives houses an item, it does not necessarily hold the copyright on the item, nor may it be able to determine if the item is still protected under current copyright law. Users are solely responsible for determining the existence of such instances and for obtaining any other permissions and paying associated fees that may be necessary for the intended use

## **Index Terms**

### **Personal Names:**

Anderson, Samuel Read, 1804-1883  
Avent, Benjamin Ward, 1812-1878  
Caswell, William Richard, 1809-1862  
Fain, Richard Gammon, 1811-1878  
Foster III, Robert Coleman, 1818-1871  
Harding, William Giles, 1808-1886  
Harris, Isham Green, 1818-1897  
Johnston, Albert Sidney, 1803-1862  
McHenry, James W., fl.1861  
Pillow, Gideon Johnson, 1806-1878  
Zollicoffer, Felix Kirk, 1812-1862

### **Corporate Names/Organizations/Government Bodies:**

Tennessee. Medical Board of the State of Tennessee  
Tennessee. Military and Financial Board of the State of Tennessee  
Tennessee. Provisional Army of Tennessee

Tennessee. Provisional Army of Tennessee. Tennessee Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup>.  
Company L.

**Subjects:**

Civil War -- Tennessee

**Geographic Names:**

Allisonia (Tenn.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861 (Now called Estill Springs)  
Camp Jackson, Sumner County (Tenn.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865  
-- Sources  
Camp Trousdale, Sumner County (Tenn.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861 --  
Sources  
Clarksville (Tenn.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources  
Knoxville (Tenn.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources  
Memphis (Tenn.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources  
Nashville (Tenn.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources  
Rogersville (Tenn.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources  
Tennessee -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources  
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

**Document Types:**

Account books  
Correspondence  
Letter books  
Lists (document genre)  
Muster rolls  
Receipts (financial records)  
Record books  
Telegram books

**Processing and Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation:**

Provisional Army of Tennessee, RG 4, Tennessee State Library and  
Archives

**Processing Information:**

Processing begun by Gregory Poole in 2008 and completed by Zachary  
Keith, 2015

## DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

---

### CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Box	Folder/Volume
Account books -- Quartermaster Records (Receipt books)	May-July 1861	1	1
Account books -- Ration books (Camp Harris and Allisonia Encampment)	May 1861	1	2
Correspondence -- Abbny-Avent	1861	1	3
Correspondence -- Bailey, James E. -Brown, Neill S.	1861	1	4
Correspondence -- Carr, J-Duncan, J. H.	1861	1	5
Correspondence -- Fain, Richard G. -Griffith, J. O.	1861	1	6
Correspondence -- Hardison, T. E.-Lyons, Jesse M.	1861	1	7
Correspondence -- McCormick, Charles-Murdock, Thomas	1861	1	8
Correspondence -- Neely, R.P.- Rutledge, A.M.	1861	1	9
Correspondence --Simpson, R – Wigfall, Elias	1861	1	10
Lists -- Lists of the Infantry, Cavalry, and Artillery of the Provisional Army of Tennessee	1861	1	11
Lists -- Militia and Muster Rolls -- Campbell County	April 1861	1	12
Receipts -- Bill of Purchase, Commissary Department	May 12 - July 9, 1861	1	13
Receipts -- Bill of Purchase, Commissary Department	July 10-July 19, 1861	1	14
Receipts -- Bill of Purchase, Commissary Department	July 22-July 31, 1861	1	15
Receipts -- Rations Receipts	July 1861	1	16
Reports -- Morning Report of the Surgeon, Nashville General Hospital	June-July 1861	1	17
Reports -- Ration Report Through May 1861 from Adjutant General's Office	May 1861	1	18
Reports -- Register for the State Military Hospital (Nashville, Tennessee)	June 1861	1	19
Reports -- Return of Medicines, Instruments, and Books, Camp Trousdale	July 1861	1	20

Reports -- Sick Registers -- 1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion, Tenn. Cavalry -- Camp Jackson (Sumner County)	July 1861	1	21
Reports -- Statement of the Strength of Several Companies of the East Tennessee Brigade	July 1861	1	22
Reports -- Surgeons Appointed by Governor Isham Harris	May 1861	1	23
Requisition for Medical Supplies	June-July 1861	1	24
Records -- Army Medical Board	1861	2	1
Records -- Military Board of the State of Tennessee	April 24, 1861- January 9, 1862	3	1
Letter books -- General R.C. Foster III	July 27- September 17, 1861	4	1
Telegrams of the Military and Financial Board of the State of Tennessee (Outgoing)	April 27- October 12, 1861	5	1
Letters and Orders of the Military and Financial Board of the State of Tennessee (Outgoing)	April 29- December 23, 1861	5	2
Reports -- Abstract of Provisions Issued to Men in Hospital at Nashville	July 1, 1861		Oversized folder 1
Reports -- Report of the Sick and Wounded at Various Camps, Army Medical Board	1861		Oversized folder 2