

Esther Hill Hawks Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2023

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm79025304>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms016033>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Manuscript Division staff, 2016
Revised 2023 December

Collection Summary

Title: Esther Hill Hawks Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1856-1867

Bulk Dates: 1861-1867

ID No.: MSS25304

Creator: Hawks, Esther Hill, 1833-1906

Extent: 520 items

Extent: 2 containers

Extent: 0.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm79025304>

Summary: Physician, educator, and abolitionist. Correspondence, diaries, and other papers relating to the work of Esther Hill Hawks and her husband, John Milton Hawks, caring for sick and wounded soldiers, including African Americans, in South Carolina during the Civil War, and as a teacher of African Americans in South Carolina and Florida during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Hawks, Esther Hill, 1833-1906.

Hawks, J. M. (John Milton), 1826-1910--Correspondence.

Hawks, J. M. (John Milton), 1826-1910.

Hill, Edward O., 1843-1917--Correspondence.

Hill, Sylvester J., 1836-1910--Correspondence.

Hill, Warren S., 1839-1914--Correspondence.

Saxton, Rufus, 1824-1908--Correspondence.

Organizations

National Freedman's Relief Association--Correspondence.

United States. Army--Military life.

United States. Army. New Hampshire Infantry Regiment, 4th (1861-1865)

United States. Army. New Hampshire Infantry Regiment, 9th (1862-1865)

United States. Army. South Carolina Volunteers, 1st (1862-1864)

United States. Army. South Carolina Volunteers, 3rd (1863-1864)

Subjects

African American soldiers.

African Americans--Education--Florida.

African Americans--Education--South Carolina.

African Americans--Florida.

African Americans--Medical care.

African Americans--South Carolina.

Education--Florida.

Education--South Carolina.

Freed persons--Education--Florida.

Freed persons--Education--South Carolina.

Freed persons--Florida.

Freed persons--South Carolina.

Port Royal (S.C.) Expedition, 1861.

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

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

Places

Beaufort (S.C.)--History.

Fernandina (Fla.)--History.

Florida--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Jacksonville (Fla.)--History.

New Hampshire--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Saint Augustine (Fla.)--History.

South Carolina--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--African Americans.

South Carolina--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Hospitals.

South Carolina--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Medical care.

South Carolina--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

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

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

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

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Participation, African American.

Occupations

Abolitionists.

Educators.

Physicians.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Esther Hill Hawks, physician, educator, and abolitionist, were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1910. An addition to the papers was given to the Library by Jess Meyer in 2023.

Processing History

The papers of Esther Hill Hawks were processed and bound by the Library of Congress after being obtained in 1910. The finding aid was created in 2016. An addition was processed and the finding aid revised in 2023 by Katherine Madison.

Additional Description

The papers of Esther Hill Hawks are described in the Library of Congress's *Handbook of Manuscripts* (Washington, D.C., 1918): 164; and in *Civil War Manuscripts: A Guide to Collections in the Manuscript Division* (Washington, D.C., 1986): 116.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Esther Hill Hawks is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Esther Hill Hawks are open to research. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting.

Published Edition

The diaries of Esther Hill Hawks were transcribed and published in *A Woman Doctor's Civil War: Esther Hill Hawks' Diary*. Gerald Schwartz, editor. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Esther Hill Hawks Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1833, Aug. 5	Born Esther Jane Hill, Hooksett, N.H.
1854	Married John Milton Hawks (died 1910)
1857	Received medical degree, New England Female Medical College, Boston, Mass.
1862	Volunteered as teacher for New York Freedman's Relief Association, National Freedman's Relief Association, Beaufort, S.C., educating soldiers of the First Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers
1863	As physician, treated African American soldiers and families, including members of the 54th Regiment, Massachusetts Colored Infantry, Beaufort, S.C.
circa 1865-1869	Established and taught in an integrated school, Jacksonville, Fla.
1870	Returned to New England to practice medicine
1906, May 6	Died, Lynn, Mass.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Esther Hill Hawks (1833-1906) span the years 1856-1876, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1861-1867. Hawks was a medical doctor who, with her husband, John Milton Hawks (1826-1910), also a doctor, treated African American soldiers during the Civil War; she also taught at Freedmen's Schools in South Carolina and Florida. The collection consists chiefly of letters to Hawks, dated 1862-1863, from her husband; brothers Edward O. Hill (New Hampshire Volunteers, 4th Regiment), Warren S. Hill, and Sylvester J. Hill (New Hampshire Volunteers, 9th Regiment); and convalescent soldiers in hospitals at Beaufort, South Carolina. Correspondence from John Milton Hawks discusses his work with freedmen, African American life, and the progress of the war in South Carolina. Letters from the Hill brothers concern the Port Royal expedition, the occupation of Jacksonville, Fernandina, and St. Augustine, Florida, and camp life. There is also correspondence between Esther Hill Hawks and members of the National Freedmen's Relief Association, and from Rufus Saxton, military governor of the Department of the South. Additional material includes returns for the 1st and 3rd South Carolina Volunteers; school records, including names of African American students taught by Hawks; and military passes.

A 2023 Addition to the papers consists of three diaries written by Hawks from 1863 to 1866, predominantly containing reflections on her experiences in South Carolina during the Civil War.

Arrangement of the Collection

This collection is arranged chronologically, followed by an addition.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Vol. 1, 1856, Jan. 14-1863, Dec. 12
BOX 1	Vol. 2, 1863, Dec. 13-1874, Dec. 13
BOX 2	2023 Addition
BOX 2	Diaries, 1863-1866 (5 folders)