

Randolph Free Library

26 Jamestown Street
Randolph, NY 14772

July 18, 1994

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Randolph, N.Y. 14772

Dear Mr. Dunkelman,

We have little information on Captain Benjamin Casler or the "bootleg bag". I found the pictures nine years ago and the bag a year later. No information was available on any of these things until a patron brought in some papers they found in the attic at the former Librarian's house. In these I found the letter from Ola Casler and could connect the items.

Mr. Ola Casler gave these items to the Library Oct. 22, 1942 and they were packed away but not together.

1. bootleg bag
2. pictures(6)
3. playbill from Libby Prison entertainment
4. Newspapers. 2 from when he was in Andersonville and some from the Armory lecture
5. 2 pictures of Captain Casler
6. Picture of the Armory where the lecture was given

We got the name of Liet. Wilson from a note found with some of the items and from the letter from the Caslers.

Unfortunately, we do not have the facilities necessary to preserve the collection or to show it to advantage and are in the process of trying to sell it. The New York State Historical Society has expressed interest, and one or two other places we have contacted. I wish Randolph could keep it's history intact but I am more afraid the collection will be destroyed with neglect or well meaning but unprofessional preservation. It is a miracle they survived because noone seemed to know they were here or what they were and I'm the third Librarian since 1942.

Thankyou for the information you sent and I'll keep you informed if I learn anything more about Capt. Casler or Liet. Wilson.

Sincerely yours,
Gearldine Adams

This is a picture of
Doane Armory -
where Chaplain B. F. Bowers,
gave his Lecture -
about the Bootleg Bag -
April, 2 - 1888 -

Prof Wilson,
made the small pictures
that there were taken
from - in Abby Pearson.

2 p
1888
-
Prof Wilson
Doane Armory

Doane Armory
-
Prof Wilson

It was at the beginning of the Civil War, when Mr. Casler left his wife and son ^{with the grandparents} and went to fight. During the war some of the soldiers came down with typhoid fever and were sent home. Mrs. Casler contracted the fever and died. The son, having no other place to go, stayed and made his home with his grandparents. When Mr. Casler came back from the war, his son was about four years old and of course he didn't know his father, but after a bit he finally accepted him and went with him although it was hard for him to leave his grandparents because he had become so fond of them. (U)

In the fall of 1862 Mr. Casler assisted in raising a company for the 154th regiment and was commissioned as a Lieutenant. A few months later he was promoted to the rank of captain of five regiments. The 37th, the 85th, the 64th, the 154th and the 9th. It contained large numbers of Catt. County men. Not one surpassed in the amount of service and heroic courage. This regiments career began at Chancellorsville and closed with Sherman's glorious Atlantic Seaboard Victory. There were many men distributed through out the 180 regiments and their courage was displayed on almost every battle field from Bull Run to Appomattox. The brave Reynolds destined soon to fall sent word to Howard who was marching toward Gettysburg to hurry forward to the rescue. Early on the 11th they responded and swept on through to vallyage into the thickest of the fight. But the enemy closed in on them and captured many prisoners. Among them was Captain Casler. Here began that slow torture. Of the 14 of Captain Casler's company who were captured with him, but four lived to return and but two are living now and they are invalids. He was in eleven prisons. (2)

The bootleg bag was made in Libby Prison. It was made by a fellow officer. It was born through 11 Southern prisons. Mr. Casler also brought back some sketches that were made by fellow prisoners during the time that they were imprisoned. They were originally made on wrapping paper but later enlargements were made of them on cloth for Chaplin Benjamin Franklin Bowen who on April 2, 1888 used them in a lecture that he gave. The subject was "The Story of the Bootleg Bag" or through 11 Southern Prisons." *This lecture was based*