

General Thomas Ewing Jr's Telegram Book for 2 January to 30 January 1864

Transcribed and annotated by Walt Busch, Battle of Pilot Knob State Historic Site



A Brief Biography

General Thomas Ewing, Jr. (1829-1896) was the son of the first Secretary of Interior, Thomas Ewing. His family, who lived in Lancaster, OH, took in a youth to help the child's mother cope with the expenses of living without a husband. The youth was Cump Sherman, who we all know today as Lt. General William Tecumseh Sherman. Tom became a lawyer early on in Kansas and helped considerably from 1859 onward in the battle to make Kansas a free state. He was also involved in land deals and railroad promotion, some of which are questionable by modern standards.

His efforts to make Kansas a free state and his considerable legal knowledge made him a solid choice to be the state of Kansas's first Supreme Court Judge. He resigned that position to become a Colonel for the 11th Kansas Infantry (later Cavalry). Ewing, his brother Hugh, his brother-in-law, William T. Sherman, and his brother Charles, all became Generals in the Civil

War. A member of his Kansas law firm, Dan McCook also became a general, making his law firm the only one in which all the partners ended up as Union generals.

Col. Ewing's leadership at the battle of Prairie Grove, AR and on various marches earned him a brigadier generalship with his first assignment on the Missouri-Kansas Border. While in this position, a Union prison under his control collapsed killing

A debate over this picture is whether this is General Thomas Ewing or not. Taken in 1863 in Butler, MO. The argument for it being him is that there just weren't that many brigadier-generals running around Butler at that time. Digitized picture from Missouri State Parks, Battle of Pilot Knob State Historic Site Collection. Digital use granted by the private owner.



some Confederate women; Captain Quantrill raided Lawrence and massacred its men; and Ewing issued some orders culminating in General Orders, No. 11, which moved everyone out of a four county area of western Missouri if they did

not live near military posts on in large cities. Between 5,000 and 10,000 people were affected by this order. In November, 1863, the order was somewhat lifted.

General Ewing was later reassigned to the District of St. Louis, where he issued similar orders to that of Order No. 11, but since this area was more heavily garrisoned, the effects were not as great. In September, 1864, he successfully defended Fort Davidson at Pilot Knob, MO, against the onslaught of Confederate General Sterling Price's troops, a force 10 times the size of Ewing's. Ewing then escaped from being surrounded and out maneuvered Price's troops for 4 more days. His actions at Pilot Knob gave St. Louis and Jefferson City enough time to fortify and reduced Price's campaign to take the state to a raid that could only plunder. Pilot Knob earned him a brevet to major general.

After the war, Ewing defended Dr. Samuel Mudd and other alleged conspirators in the Lincoln Assassination plot. None of his clients received the death penalty, while all other tried at that time ended up swinging on the gallows. Later, he led a public campaign in support of President Andrew Johnson who was facing impeachment and probably helped influence the deciding vote. Later in life he became a successful US representative and failed at an attempt to become Governor of Ohio. He was a strong advocate of Greenback dollars (instead of only gold coins), silver dollars, and continually tried his hand at land purchases and railroad development. While he might occasionally be successful in business ventures, they generally failed. He left Ohio and went to New York to do what he did best and practiced law. He died after being struck by a street car in 1896.

About the Telegrams

General Thomas Ewing Jr.'s annotated telegram book covers a period in his life between General Orders, No. 11 and his defense of the fortifications at Pilot Knob. In January, 1864, the general knew that the department of Missouri and Kansas were going to be redistricted and his border district most likely split between the two states. He thought this a bad idea and asked for transfer into the field with his old command, the 11th Kansas Cavalry, to Indian Territory (modern Oklahoma). While we don't find out the outcome from these telegrams, he was reassigned to the Department of Colorado in February or March, but managed to have himself reassigned to the District of St. Louis by end of spring.

Several persons of note are mentioned in these telegrams. Captain Edmund Ross, 11th Kansas and life-long friend of Ewing, was the vote in 1868 that saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment. Major General John Schofield, Governor Thomas Carney, and Judge Hiram Griswold are a few others.

Also, several of the telegrams cover the organization of Missouri and United States Colored Troops, mentioning several of the officers by name. Please note that if you want to read the



telegrams in chronological order, they start at the end of the book; therefore, page 1 is the last telegram sent/received.

The original telegram book is available for review at Battle of Pilot Knob State Historic Site, Missouri State Parks, and they can be contacted at 573-546-3454 or battleofpilotknobstatehistoricsite@dnr.mo.gov

Citation:

Ewing, Brigadier General Thomas Jr. , Telegram Book for 2 January to 30 January 1864;
Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks Battle of Pilot Knob State Historic Site
Collection, 65-2015-001-0001

Legend

_____ denotes missing text on all items.

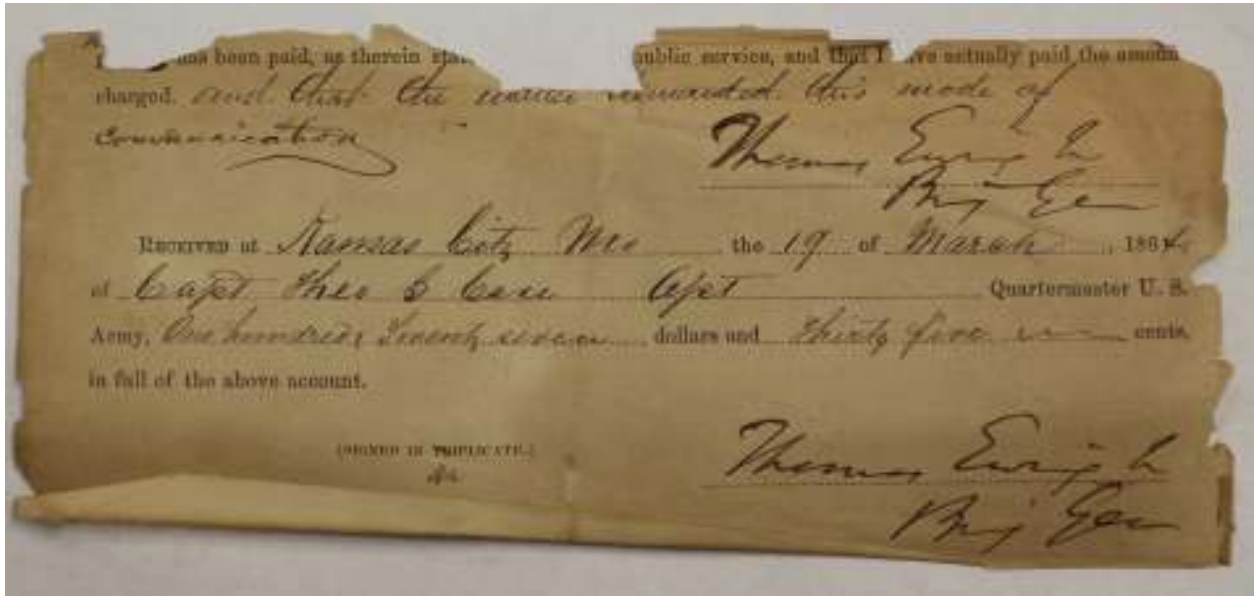
??? denotes unknown scribble

Money amounts indicate charges for telegram

[?] Unsure I transcribed it correctly

Disallow is quartermaster notation to not allow US payment of telegram.





_____ has been paid, as therein stated _____ public service, and that I have actually paid the amount charged. And that the matter demanded this mode of communication.

Thomas Ewing Jr.
Brig. Gen.

Received at Kansas City, Mo, the 19 of March, 1864, of Capt. Theo G. Case, Asst Quartermaster U.S. Army, One hundred, twenty seven dollars and Thirty five ---cents, in full of the above account.

(Signed in triplicate) Du[plicate]

Thomas Ewing, Jr.
Brig Gen

Incl. expenses



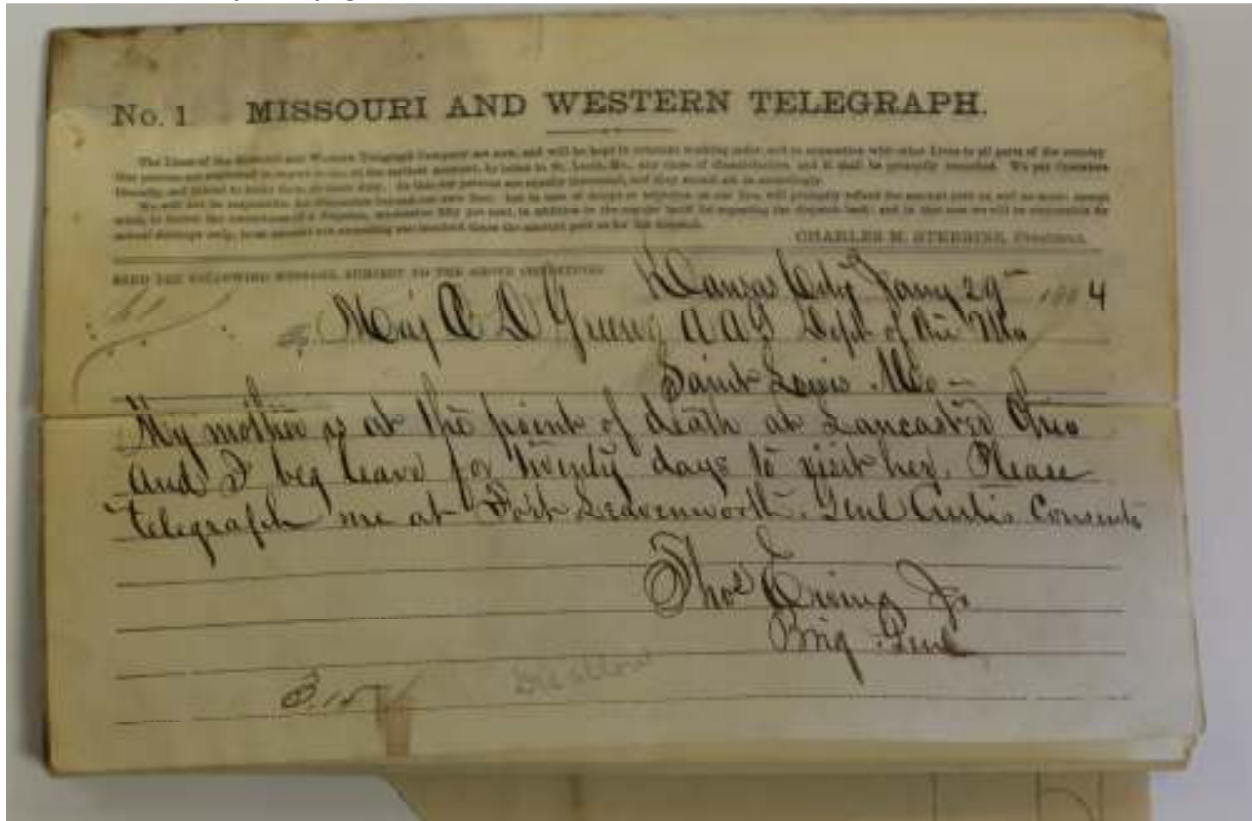
No. 79 Ab____
 Brig Genl. _____
 Dollars 1_____

Paid 19 of Mar____
 Telegrams
 Jany 2 to 30, 1864

Mc E?? 121.60
 Pers Charge____ 5.75
~~Disallow~~ 127.35

To Gen. Thos Ewing Jr.

The matter being private business should not have
 been paid by the U.S. + is ??? a personal charge
 Sub Ver 1 to 6 incl



[Form] No. 1. MISSOURI AND WESTERN TELEGRAPH.

The Lines of the Missouri and Western Telegraph Company are now, and will be kept in constant working order, and in connection with other Lines to all parts of the country. Our patrons are requested to report to me, at the earliest moment, by letter to St. Louis, Mo., any cause of dissatisfaction, and shall be promptly remedied. We pay Operators liberally, and intend to make them do their duty. In this our patrons are equally interested, and they should aid us accordingly.

We will not be responsible for dispatches beyond our own lines; but in case of delays or mistakes on our line, will promptly refund the amount paid us, and no more; except when to insure the correctness of the dispatch, we receive fifty per cent, in addition to the regular tariff for repeating the dispatch back; and in that case we will be responsible for *actual damages only*, to an amount not exceeding one hundred times the amount paid us for the dispatch.

CHARLES M. STEBBINS, President.

SEND THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE, SUBJECT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS

61/

Kansas City Jany 29 1864

To Maj O D Greene A A G Dept of Mo
Saint Louis Mo -

My mother is at the point of death at Lancaster Ohio and I beg leave for twenty days to visit her. Please telegraph me at Fort Leavenworth. Genl Curtis consents

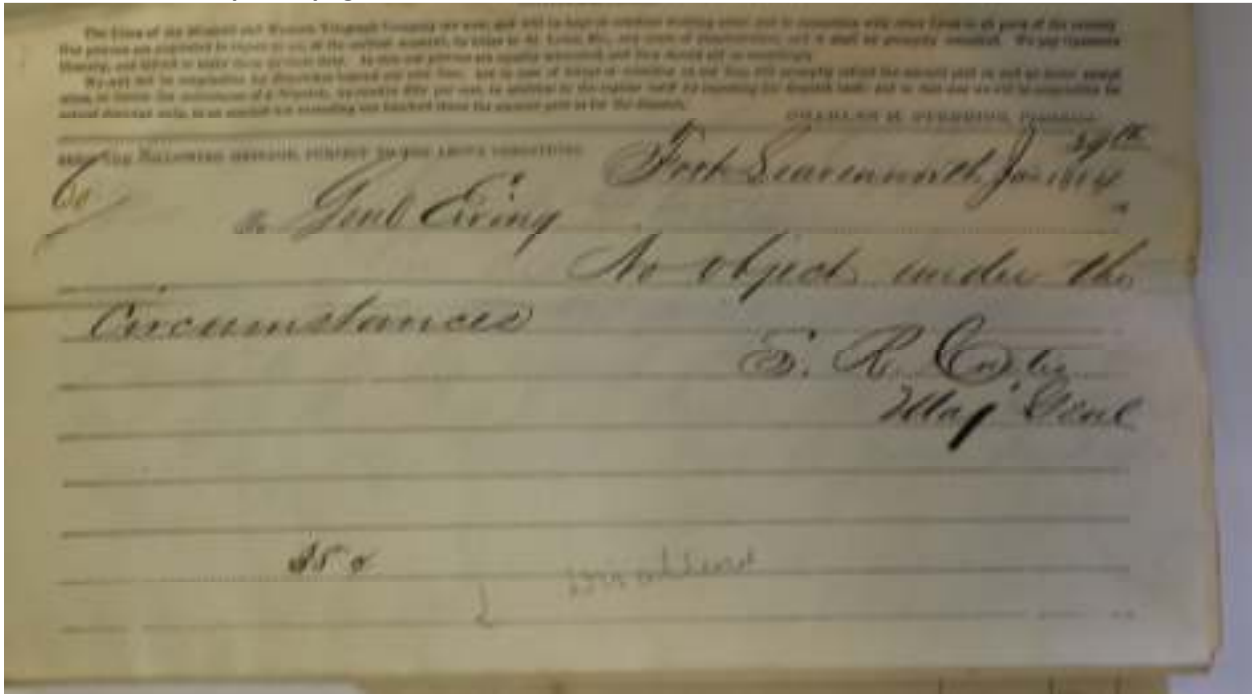
Thos Ewing Jr.

3.15 Disallow

Brig Genl

[Major Oliver Davis Greene, graduate West Point 1854, Assistant Adjutant General, Dept of Mo]





60/
Copy

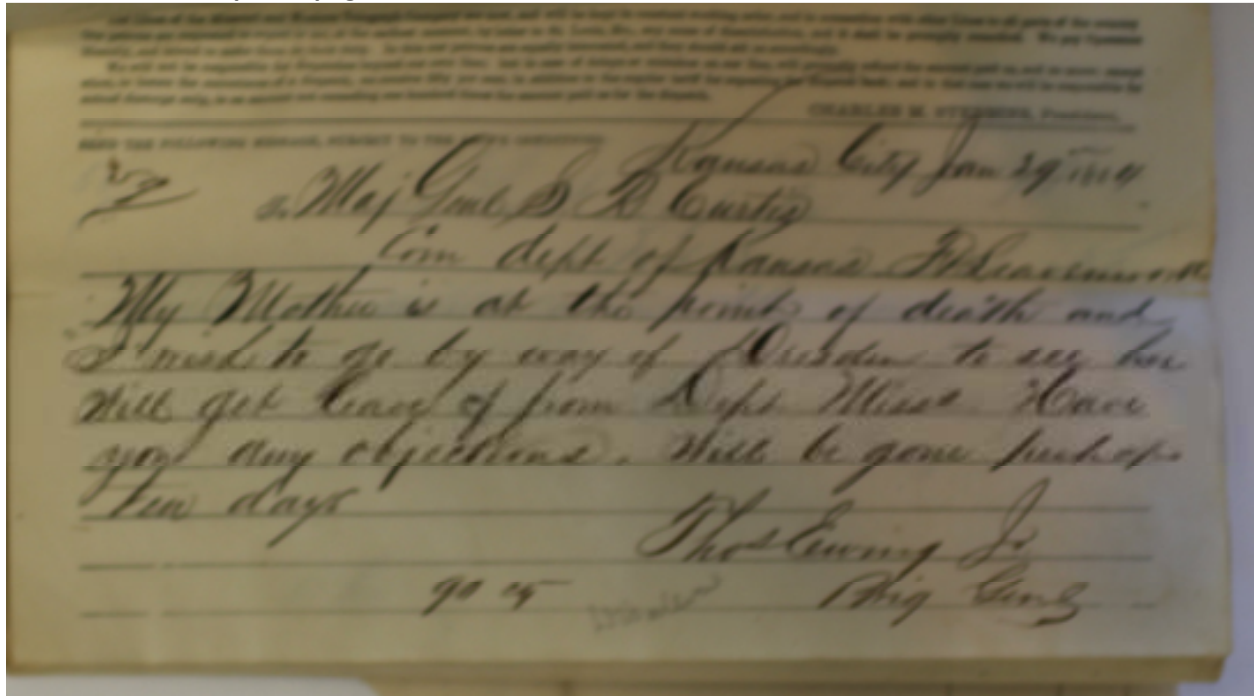
Fort Leavenworth Jan 29th 1864

To Genl Ewing
No object under the circumstances
S.R. Curtis
Maj. Genl.

35¢ Disallow



[Major General Samuel R. Curtis
from the Library of Congress
Collection]



59/

Kansas City Jan 29 1864

To Maj Genl S R Curtis
Com dept of Kansas Ft Leavenworth

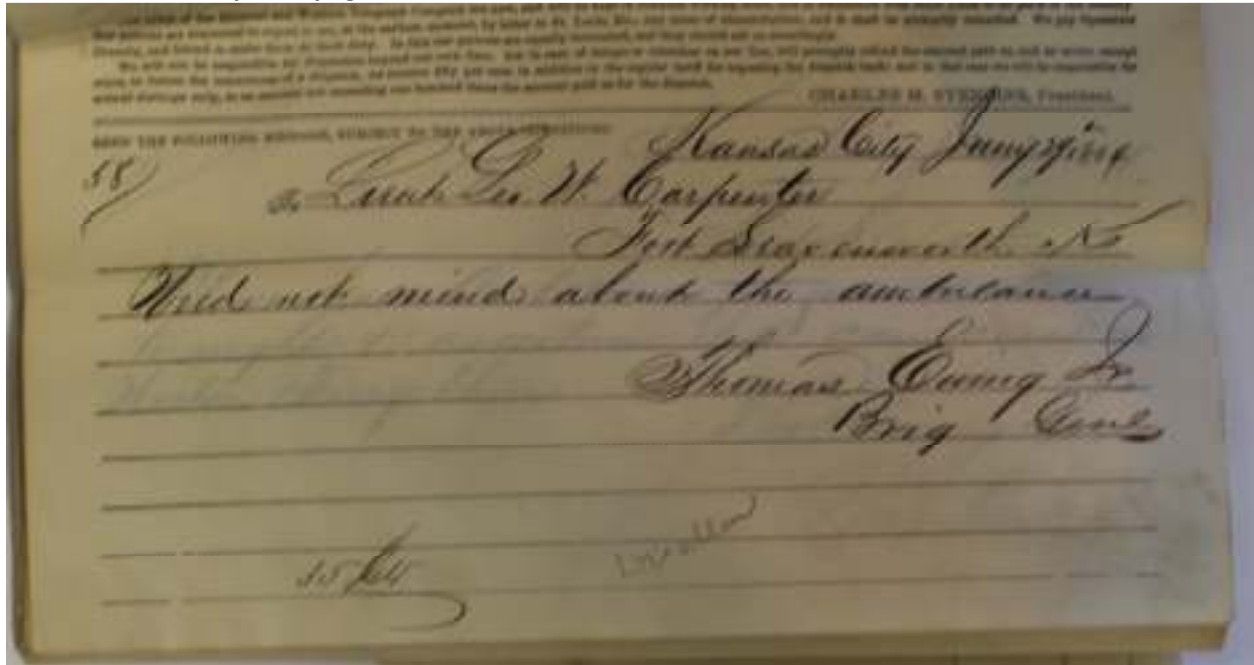
My mother is at the point of death and I wish to go by the way of Dresden to see her Will get leave of from Dept Misso Have you any objections. Will be gone perhaps ten days.

Thos Ewing Jr
Brig Genl

90 cts Disallow

[Maria Willis Boyle married Thomas Ewing, the General's father, in 1819. She died 20 Feb, 1864 in the family home in Lancaster, OH]





Kansas City Jany 29th 1864

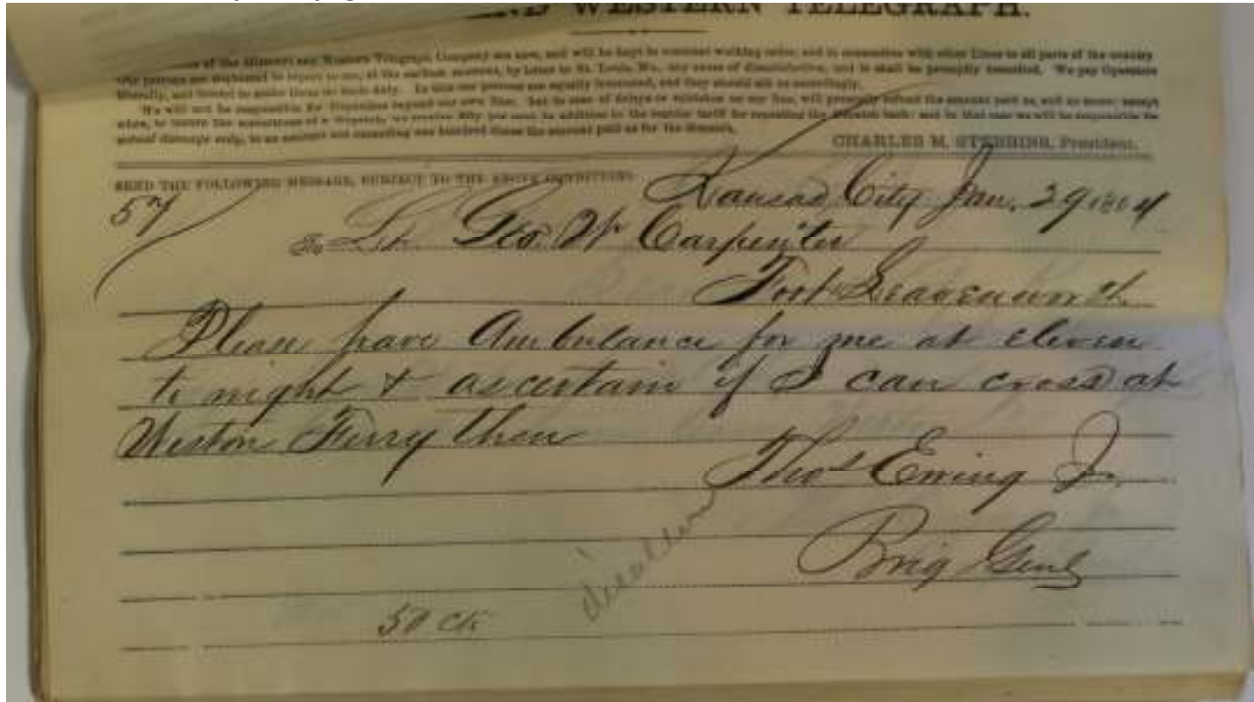
58/ To Lieut Geo W. Carpenter
Fort Leavenworth Ks

Need not mind about the ambulance

Thomas Ewing Jr.
Brig. Genl

35 cents *Disallow*

[Lieutenant George Washington Carpenter, 14th Kansas Infantry & Quartermaster]



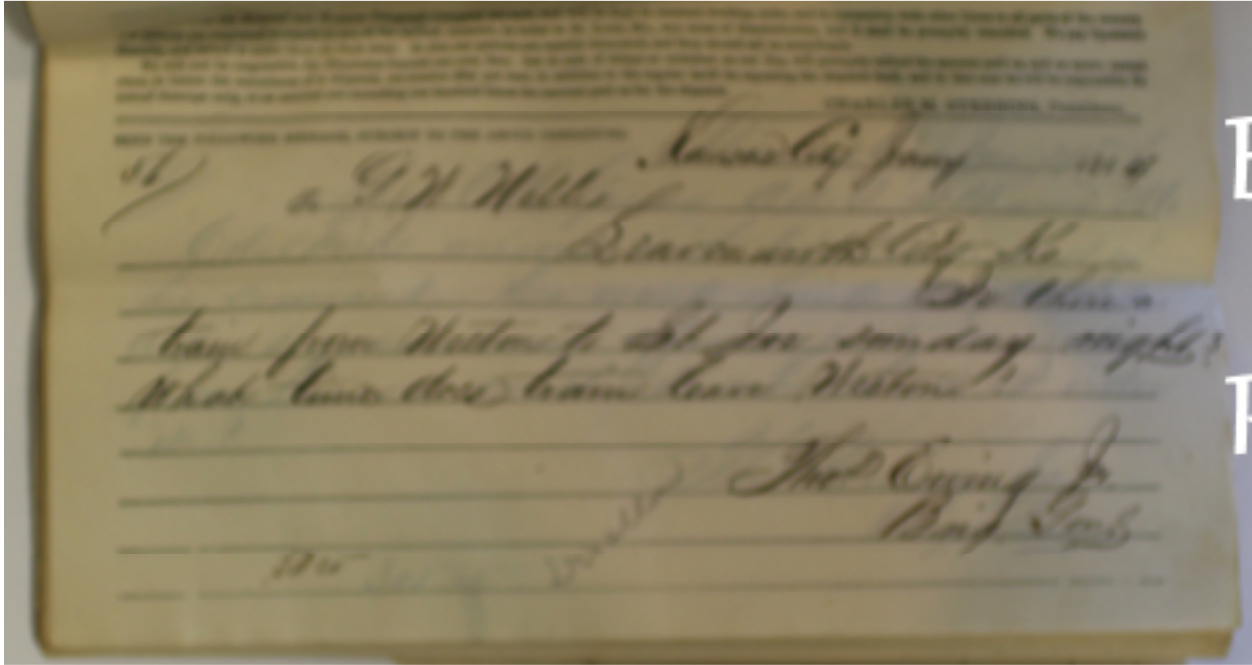
57/

Kansas City Jan. 29 1864

To Lt. Geo. W Carpenter
Fort Leavenworth

Please have ambulance for me at eleven tonight + ascertain if I can cross at Weston Ferry then
Thos Ewing Jr.
Brig Genl

50 cts Disallow



56/

Kansas City Jan'y 1864

To G. W. Nellis

Leavenworth City, Ks.

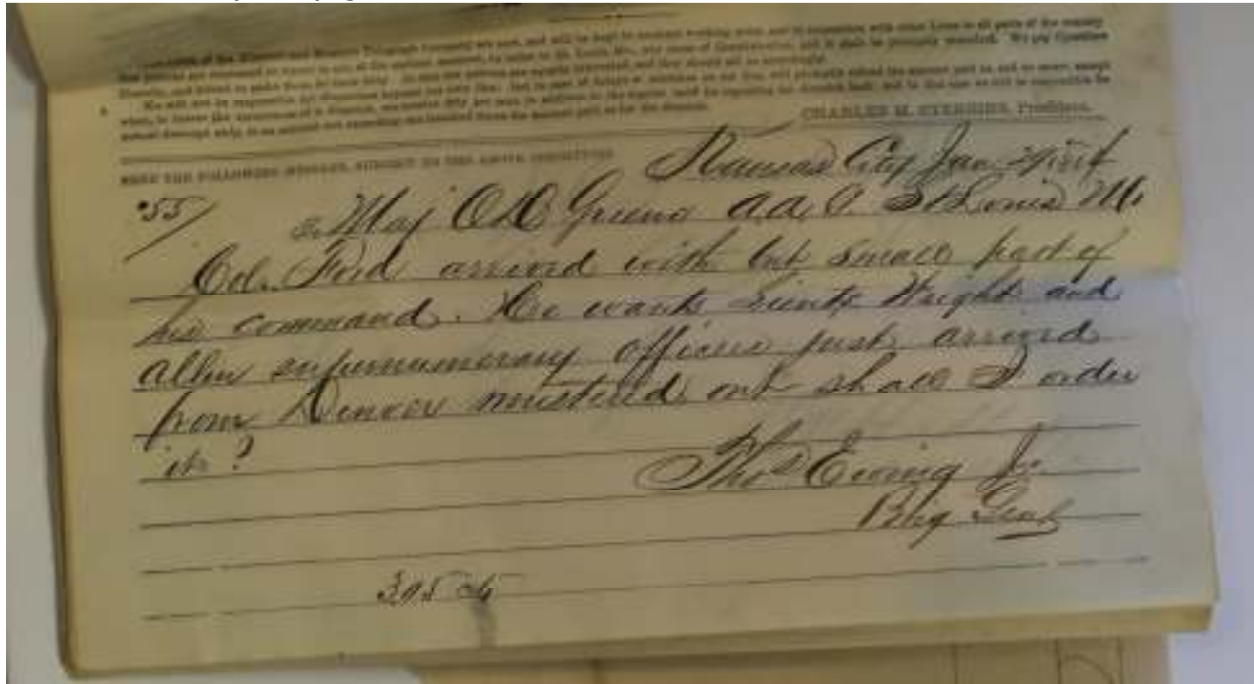
Is there a train from Weston to St Joe Sunday night? What time does the train leave Weston?

Thos Ewing Jr.

Brig. Genl

50 cts *Disallow*

[George W. Nellis was an officer/employee of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad]



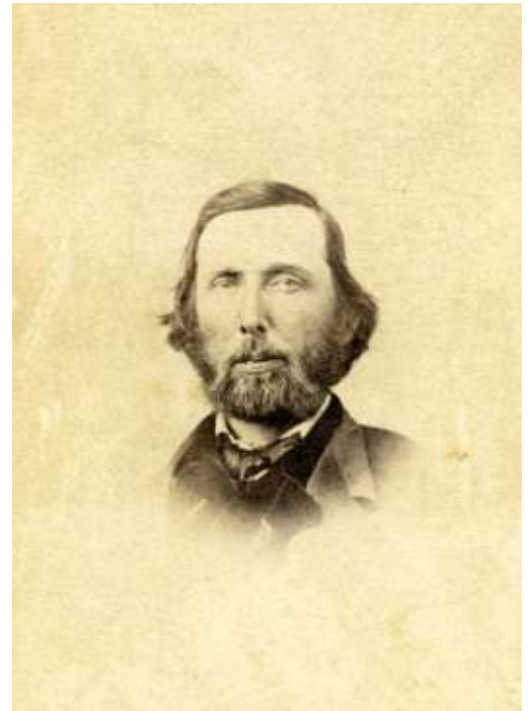
55/ Kansas City Jan 29th 1864
 To Maj. O.D. Greene A.A. G. St Louis Mo
 Col. Ford arrived with but small part of his command. He wants Lieuts Wright and Allen supernumerary officers just arrived from Denver mustered out shall I order it?
 Thos. Ewing Jr.
 Brig Genl

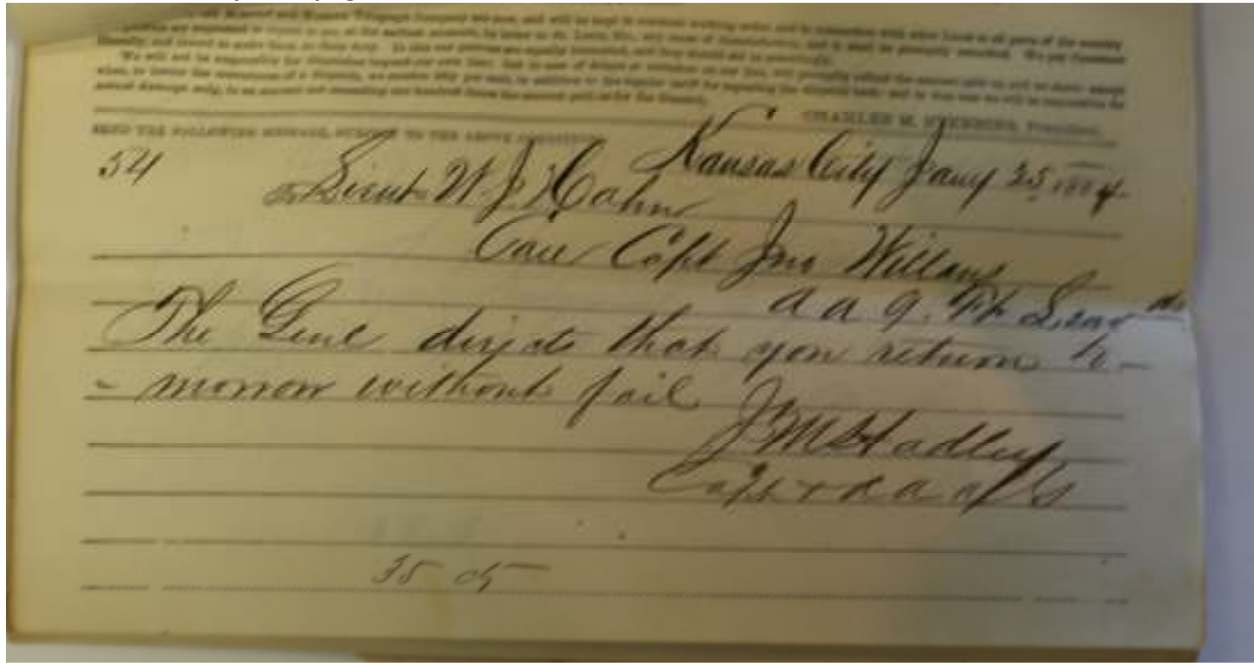
3.05 cents

[This telegram is found in the official records.]

[Colonel James Hobart Ford, 2nd Colorado Cavalry, fought at Glorietta Pass, Cabin Creek and Honey Springs, before coming to the Border District. Image Courtesy Wilson's Creek National Battlefield; WICR 32054-A]

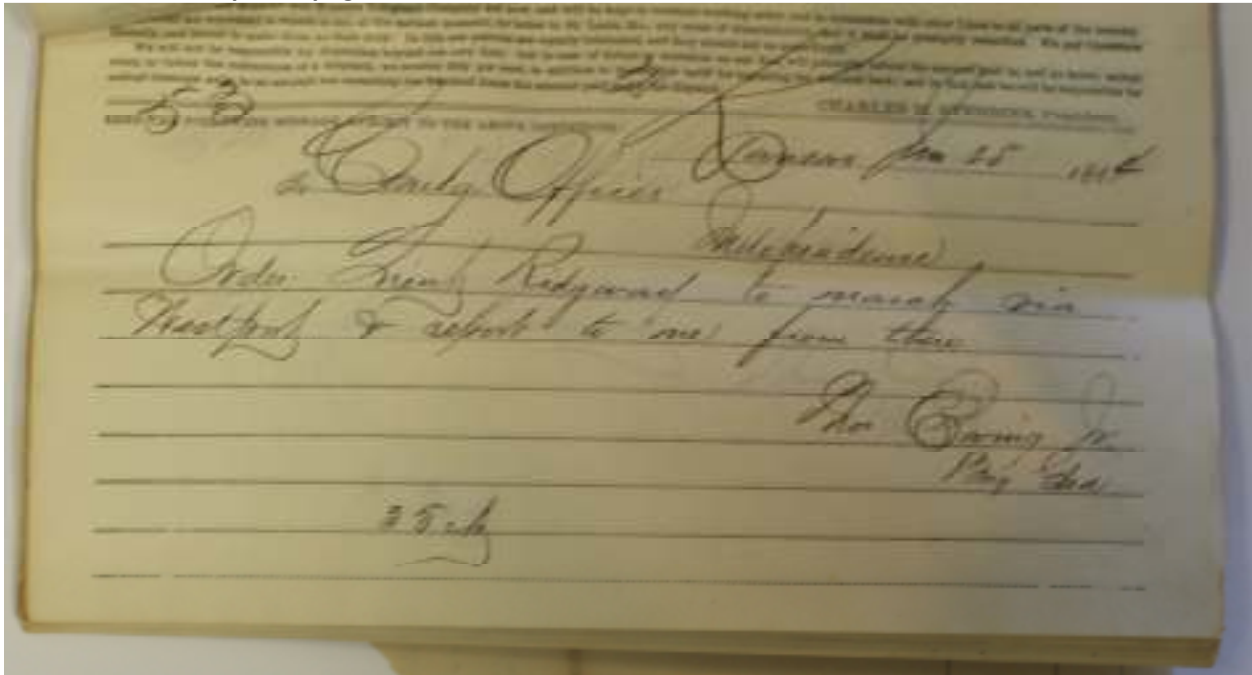
[Lieut. Benjamin F. Allen, Co. G, 3rd Colorado Infantry and Lieutenant David R. Wright, Co. F, 3rd Colorado Infantry were to be shortly mustered out of service as they had too many officers as units consolidated into the 2nd Colorado Cavalry.]





54/ Kansas City Jany 25 1864
 To Lieut. W. J. Hahn
 Care Capt Jno Willans
 A A G Ft Leavth
 The Genl directs that you return tomorrow without fail.
 J. M Hadley
 Capt + AAAG
 35 cts

[Lieut. W.J. Hahn is possibly William J. Hahn of the 1st Missouri Engineers. Captain-Assistant Adjutant General John Willans enlisted originally in the 11th Kansas Infantry/Cavalry. Lieut. John Milton Hadley enlisted originally in the 8th Kansas Volunteers. Later in life he served as sheriff of Olathe, KS and later as a state senator.]



53

Kansas Jan 25 1864

To Comdg. Officer

Independence

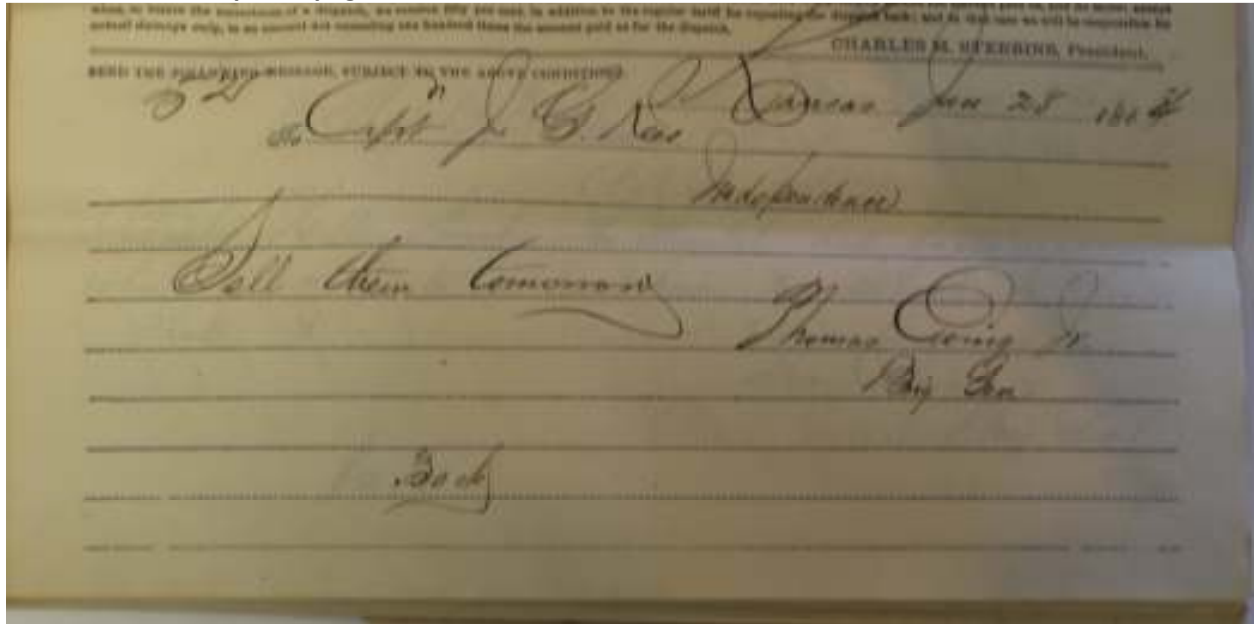
Order Lieut Ridgway to march via Westport + report to me from there

Tho Ewing Jr

Brig Gen

35 cts

[John Ridgeway, 1st Lt., 11th KS Cavalry, was the subject of several e-mails of the Missouri State Militia in the days preceding this telegram for pillaging in the area of Independence.]



52

Kansas Jan 25 1864

To Capt J. G. Rees

Independence

Sell them tomorrow

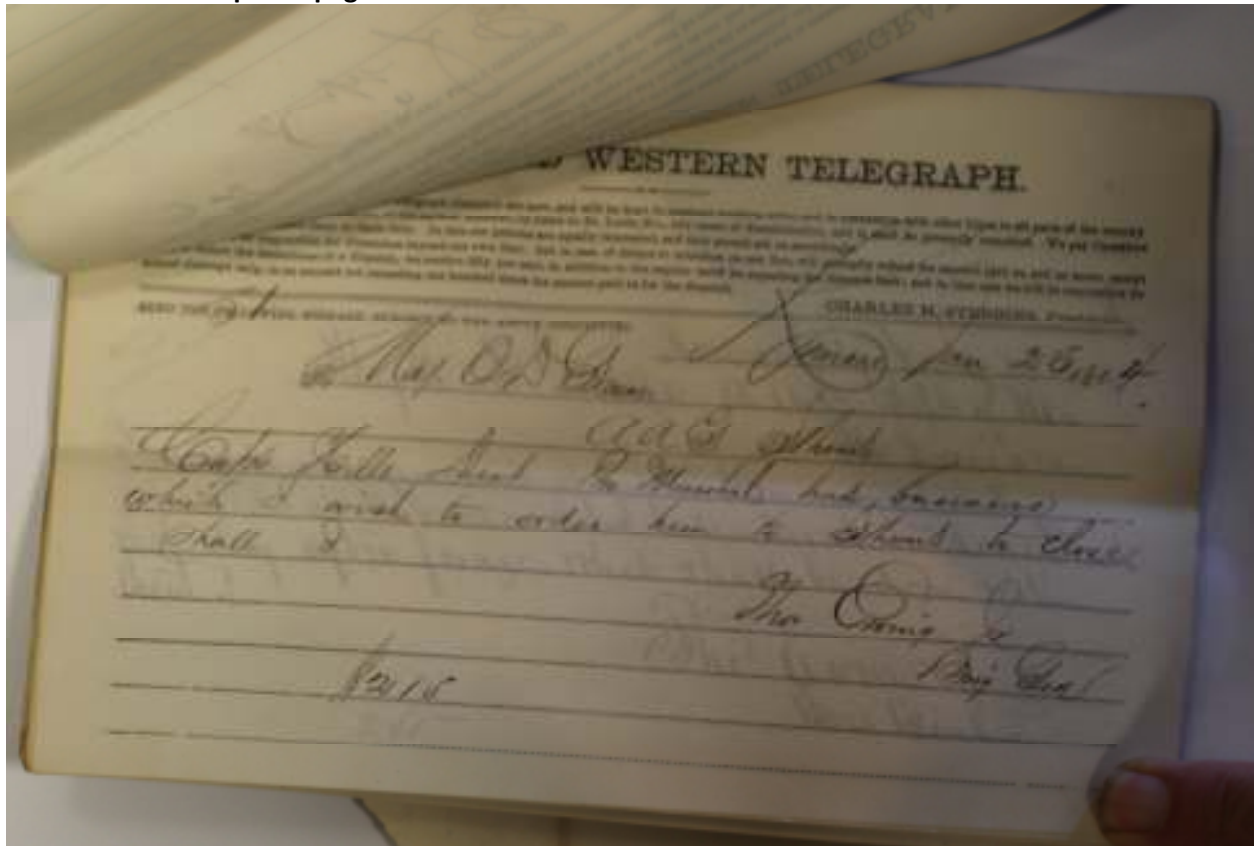
Thomas Ewing Jr.

Brig Gen.

.30 cts

[Captain Jacob G. Rees, Co .F, 11th Kansas Cavalry, of Mount Gilead, KS enlisted Sep. 11, 1862 Resigned Feb. 23, 1865]





51

Kansas Jan 25 1864

To Maj. OD Greene
A A G St Louis

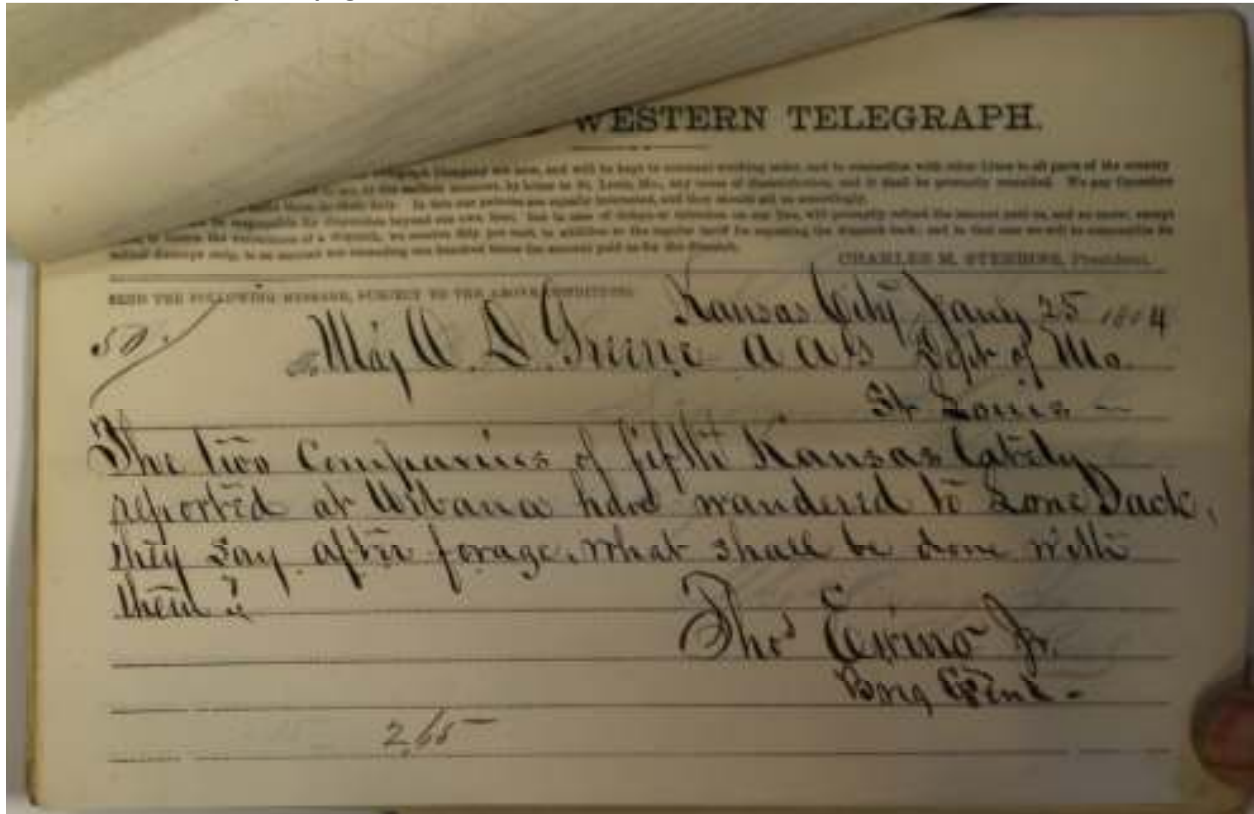
Capt Hills Dist Pro Marshal has business which I wish to order him to St Louis to close
Shall I

Tho Ewing Jr
Brig Gen

\$2.15

[Charles Spear Hills, Captain, 10th Kansas Cavalry Co A, mustered 1861, discharged August 30, 1865. Aide-de-Camp to General Ewing during battle of Pilot Knob, buried Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis, MO. – Photo from the Missouri State Parks, Battle of Pilot Knob State Historic Site digital collection]





50/

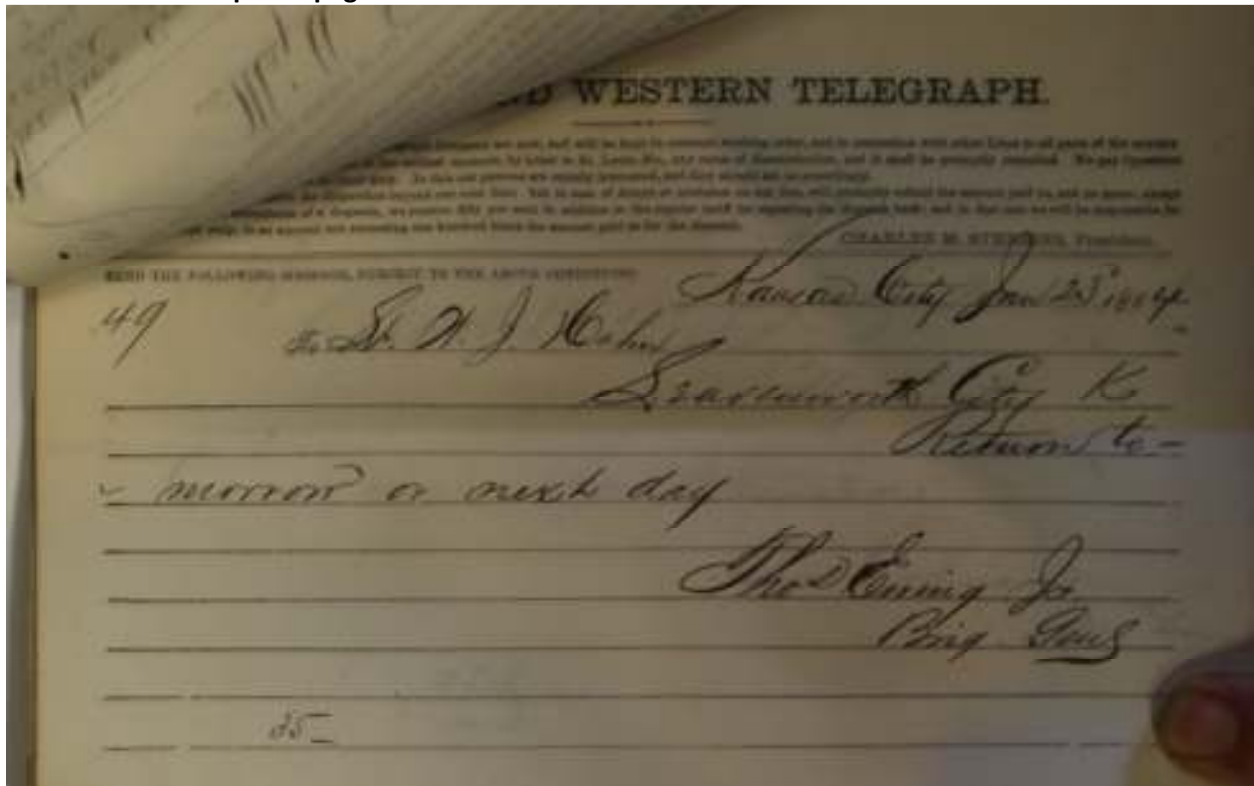
Kansas Jan 25 1864

To Maj. O.D. Greene
 A A G Dept of Mo.
 St Louis

The two companies of fifth Kansas Cavely [sic] reported at Urbana have wandered to Lone Jack they say after forage, what shall be done with them?

Thos Ewing Jr.
 Brig Genl.

2.65



49

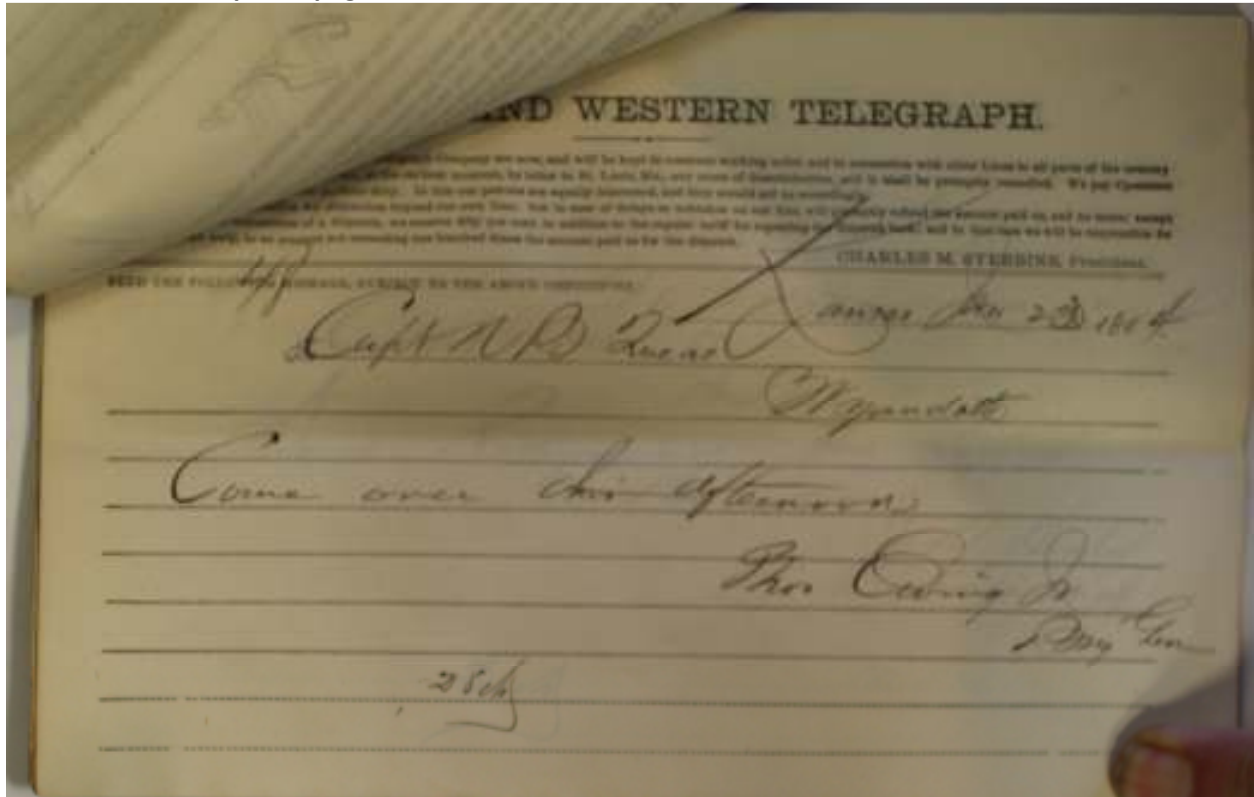
To Lt. W. J. Hahn
Leavenworth City Ks

Kansas City Jan 23 1864

Return tomorrow or next day

Thos Ewing Jr
Brig Genl

35__



48

Kansas Jan 23 1864

To Capt N.B. Lucas
Wyandotte

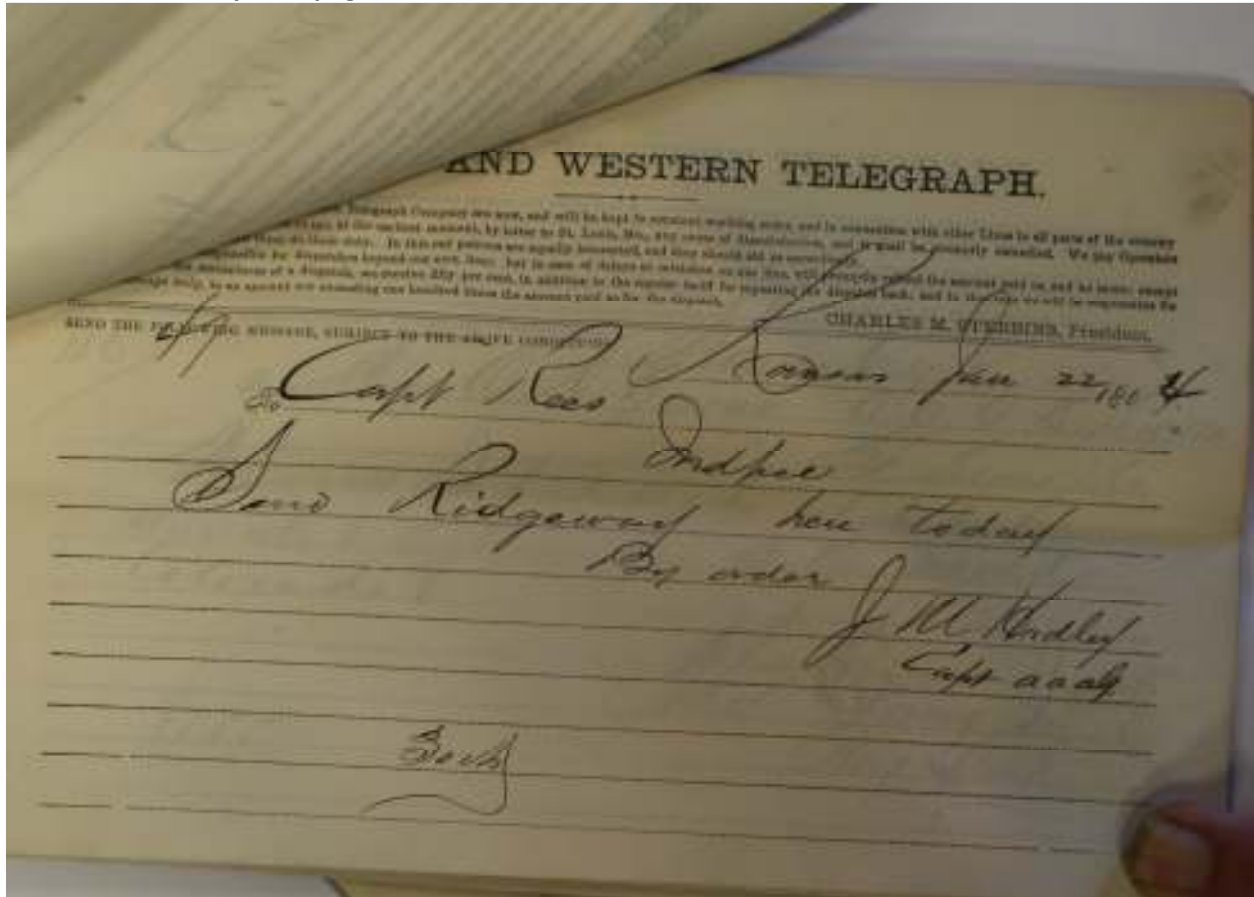
Come over this afternoon

Thos Ewing Jr
Brig Gen

28 cts

[Most likely Capt. Nathaniel B. Lucas, Co. G, 6th Kansas Cavalry and later of Co. A, 18th USCT Infantry]





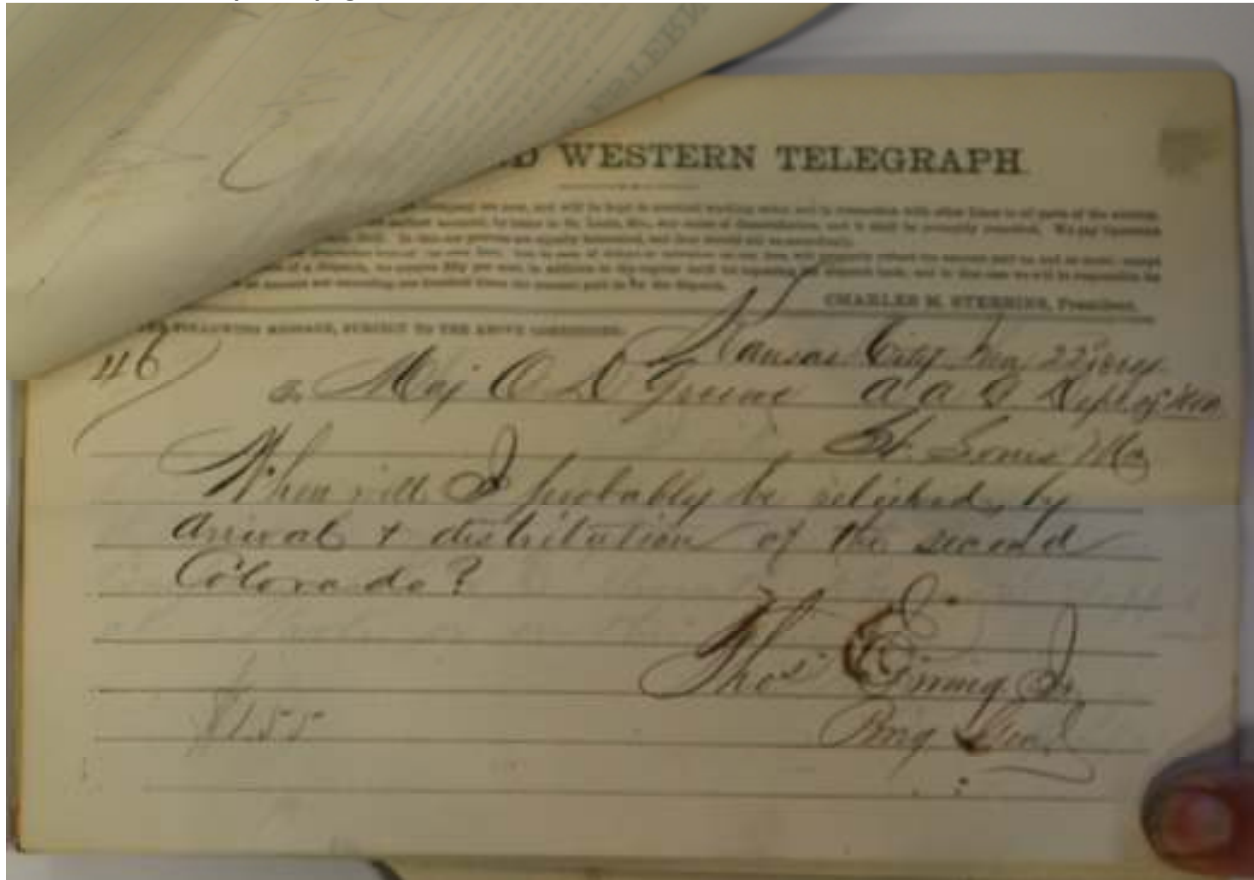
47

Kansas Jan 22 1864

To Capt Rees
 Indpce
 Sam Ridgeway here today by order
 J M Hadley
 Capt A A G

30 cts





46/

Kansas City Jan 22 1864

To Maj OD Greene A A G Dept of Mo

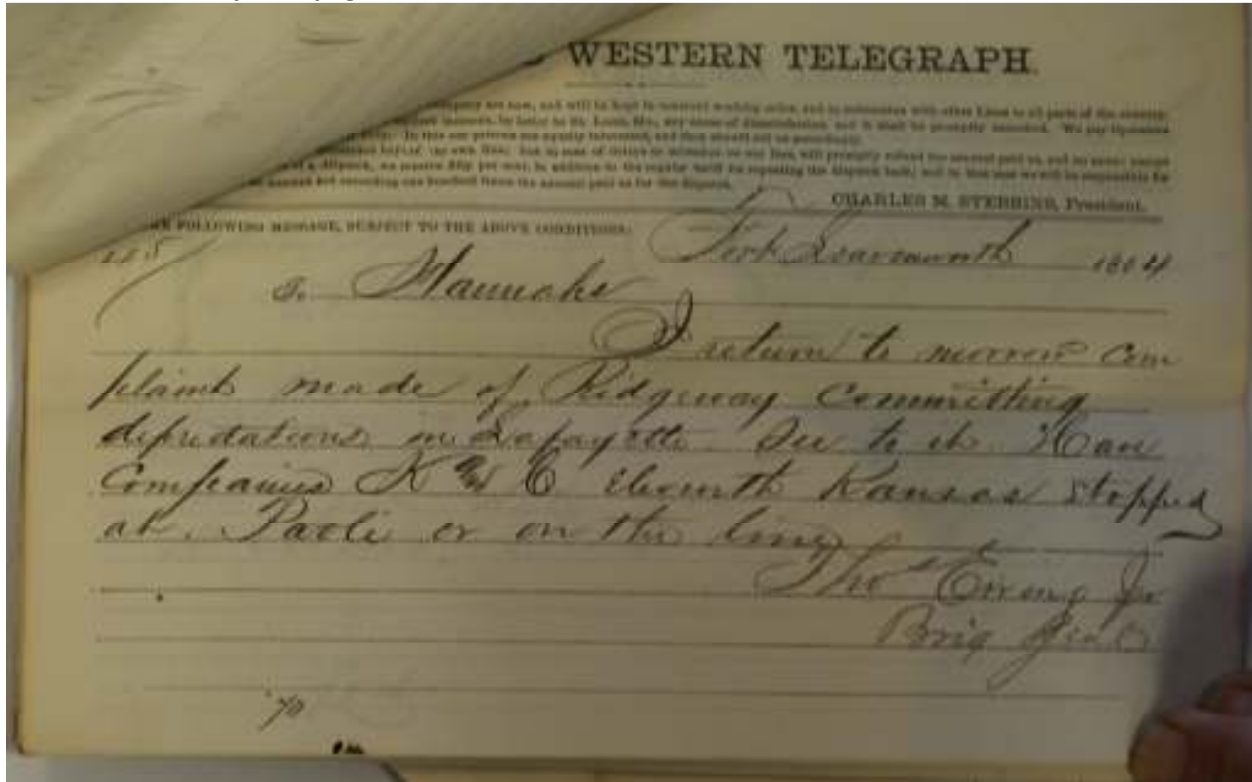
St Louis Mo

When will I probably be relieved by arrival + distribution of the second Colorado?

Thos Ewing Jr

Brig Genl

\$1.55



45/

Fort Leavenworth 1864

To Hannahs

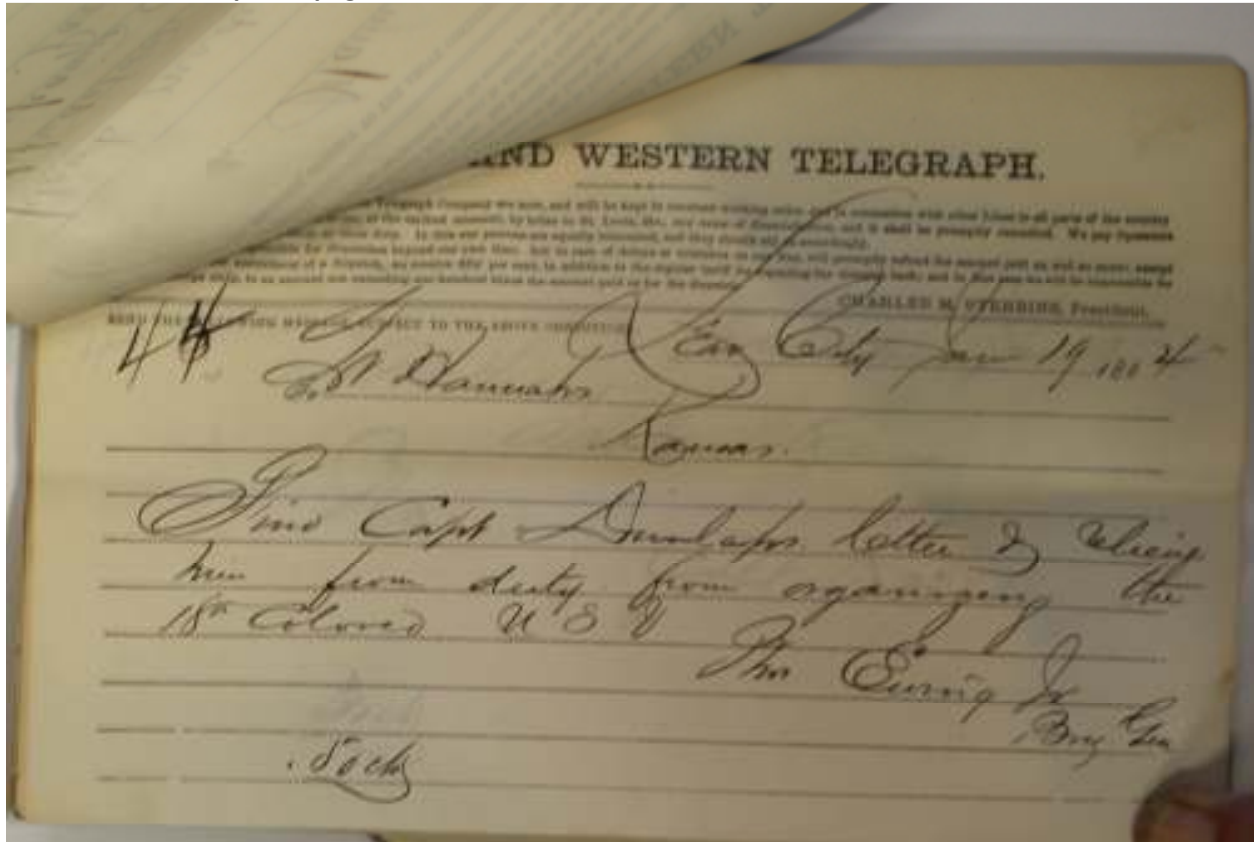
I return to morrow complaint made of Ridgeway committing depredations in Lafayette. See to it. Have Companies K and C Eleventh Kansas stopped at Paoli or on the line.

Thos Ewing Jr

Brig Genl

70

[Lieut. Harrison Hannahs, 11th Kansas Cavalry, was Assistant Adjutant General on General Ewing's Staff. He later wrote an article that appeared in Vol. 12 of the Kansas Historical Collections, Hannahs, Harrison. "General Thomas Ewing, Jr." 12 (1912): 276-282, which basically covered the story of Ewing meeting with Sherman and Grant when the march to the seas was discussed and subsequently turning down an offer to command under Sherman.]



44

Leav City Jan 19 1864

To Hannahs

Kansas

Give Capt Dunlaps letter and relieve him from duty from organizing the 18th Colored USV

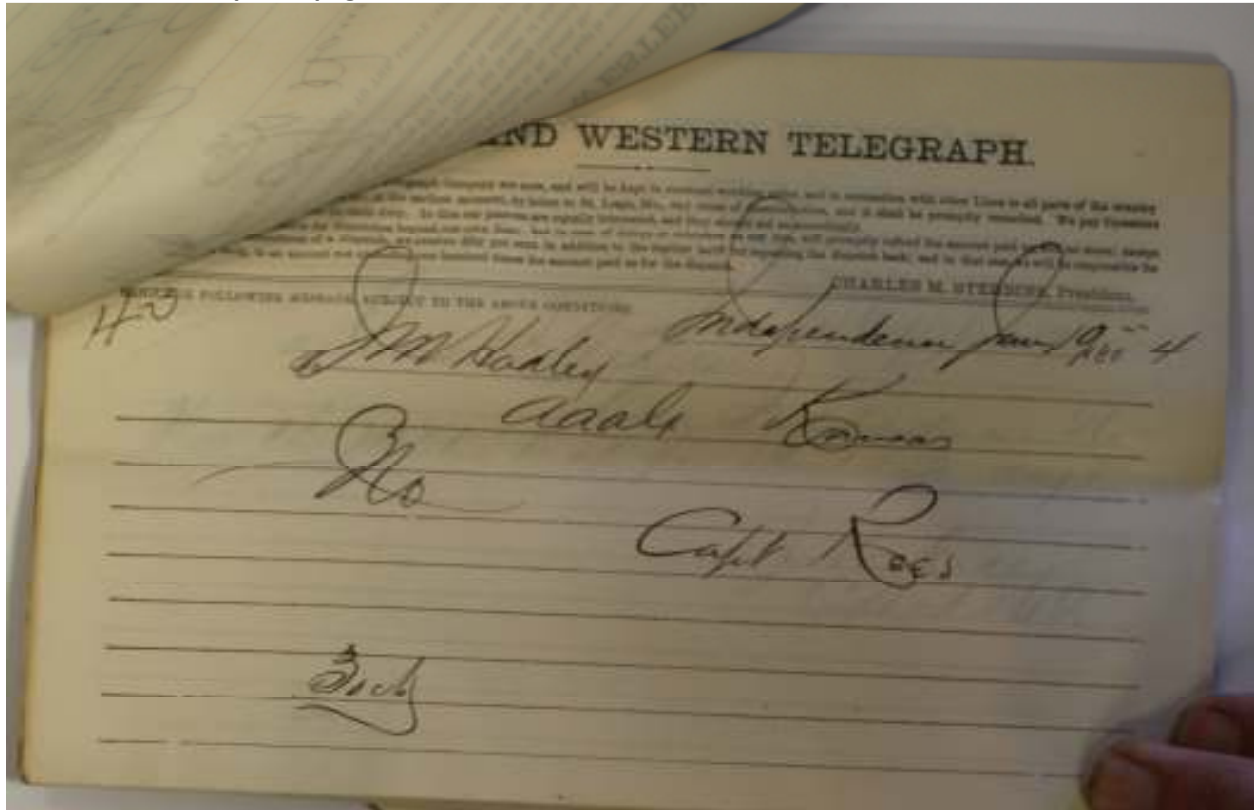
Thos Ewing Jr

Brig Gen

.50 cts

[William Dunlap, Co. H, 15th Kansas Cavalry. Dunlap was discharged from the 15th on September 15, 1864, for promotion and assignment to the 18th U. S. Colored Infantry as a second lieutenant in Company B. Promoted to first lieutenant, Dunlap served as the regiment's adjutant until the regiment was mustered out of service on February 21, 1866. Image Courtesy Wilson's Creek National Battlefield; WICR 31815]





43

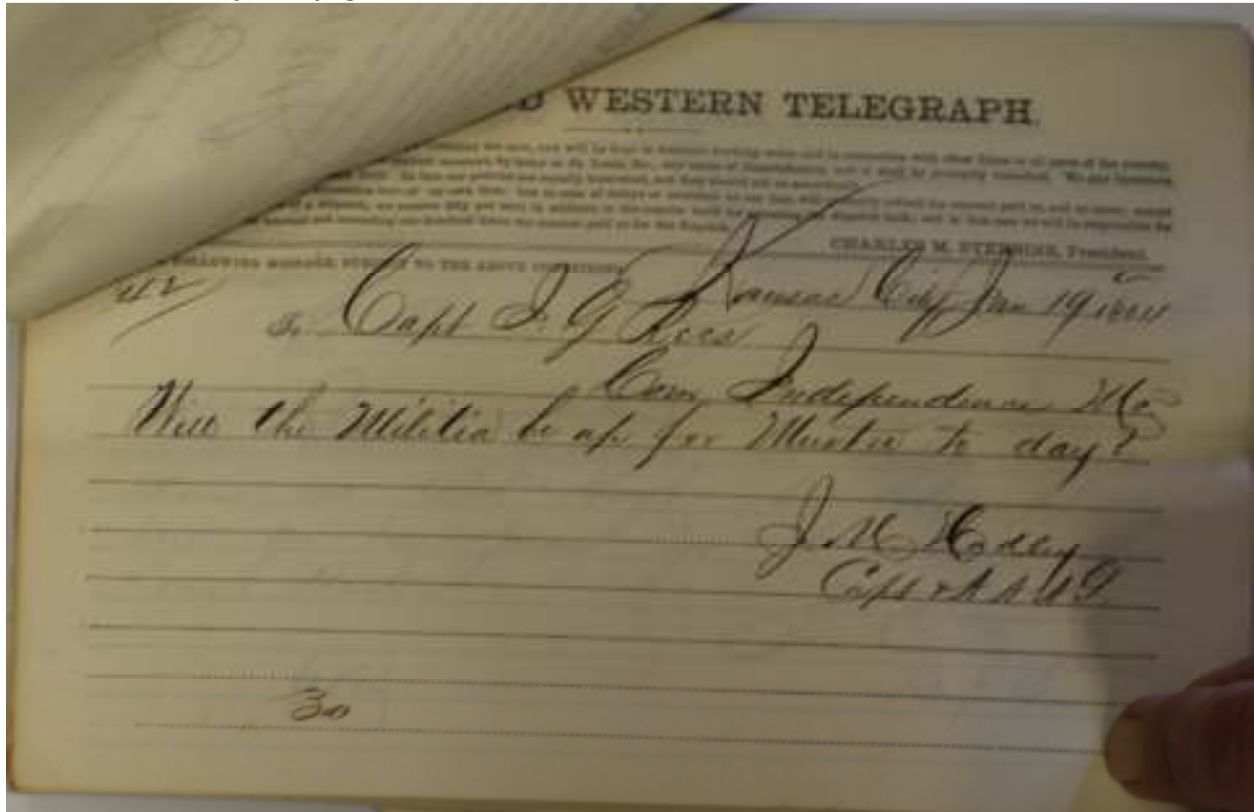
Independence Jan 19 1864

To JM Hadley
AAAG Kansas

No

Capt Rees

.30 cts



42

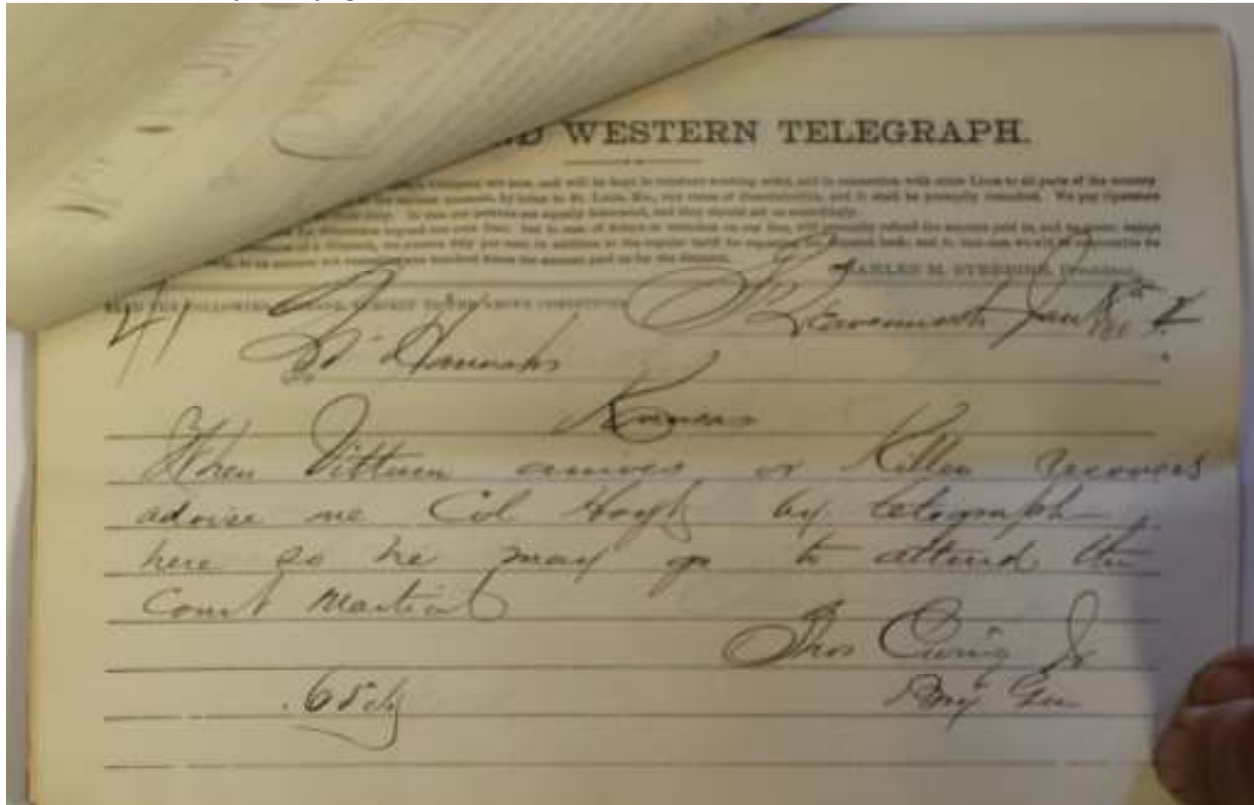
Kansas City Jan 19 1864

To Capt J G Rees
Com Independence Mo

Will the militia be up for muster to day?

JM Hadley
Capt + AAAG

30



41

Ft Leavenworth Jan 18 1864

To Hannahs
Kansas

When Vittum arrives or Killen recovers advise me Col Hoyt(?) by telegraph
He so he may go to attend the court martial.

Thos Ewing Jr
Brig Gen

.65 cts

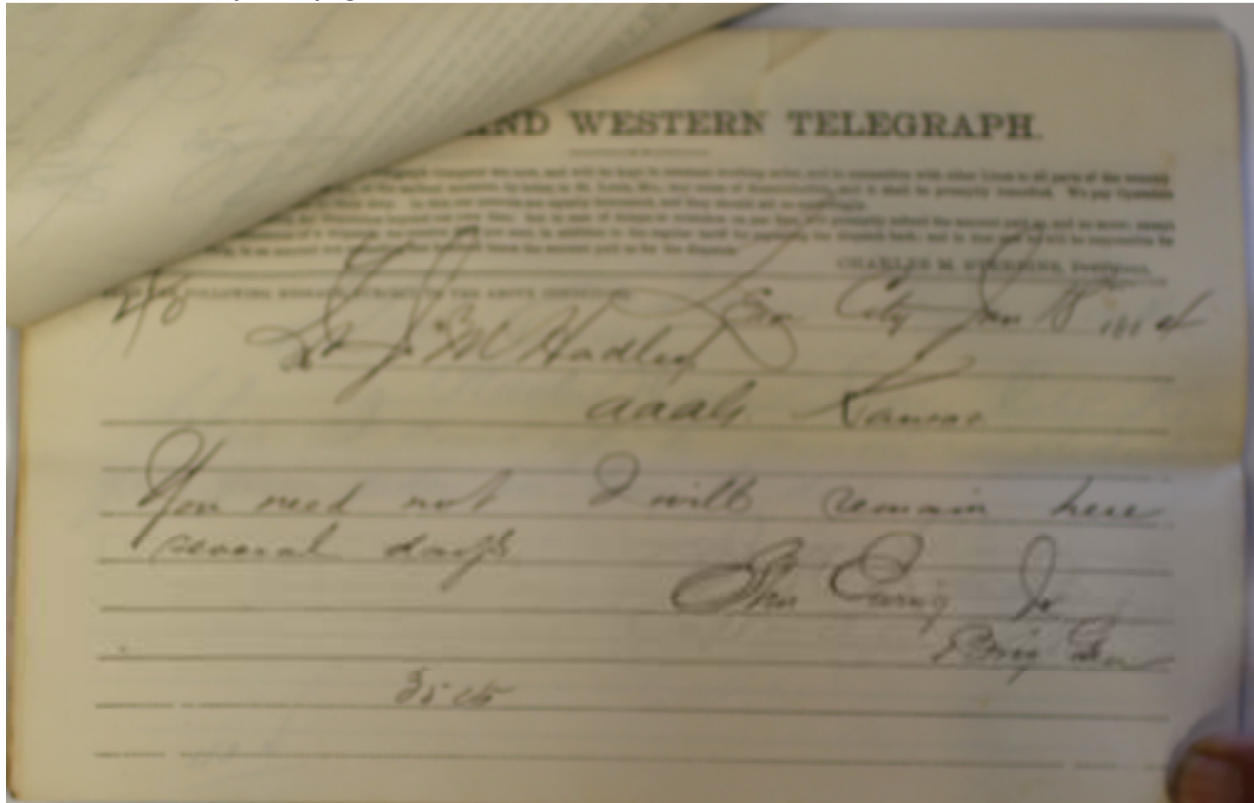
[From A Standard History of Sauk County, Wisconsin, Vol. 1 --Colonel Vittum [not Vitturn] raised Company F and served as its captain until he was promoted to be lieutenant colonel in March, 1865. He was a New Hampshire man; came to Wisconsin in 1851, and, after stopping in Milwaukee for a short time, came to Baraboo in August of that year. Although a member of the bar, his mind was more of a business than a professional type, and for several years before the war he made quite a fortune in his land investments and dealings. In 1853-54 he also served as state senator, representing the counties of Sauk, Juneau, Adams and Marquette. After the war he returned to business pursuits, became interested in the Island Woolen Mill and organized the First National Bank of Baraboo, continuing its president until his death, April 10, 1880.

Captain Killen is probably Captain Thomas P. Killen, Co. H, 9th Kansas Cavalry.

George Henry Hoyt (1837 - 1877) was an abolitionist and attorney for John Brown. Promoted to Lt. Colonel of the 15th Kansas Cavalry in September 1863, he rose to the rank of Brevet Brigadier General by war's end. Hoyt shot and killed guerrilla captain George Todd during the Second Battle of Independence on Oct 21, 1864.

Following the war, Hoyt served as the sixth Attorney General of Kansas.]





40

Leav City Jan 18 1864

To JM Hadley

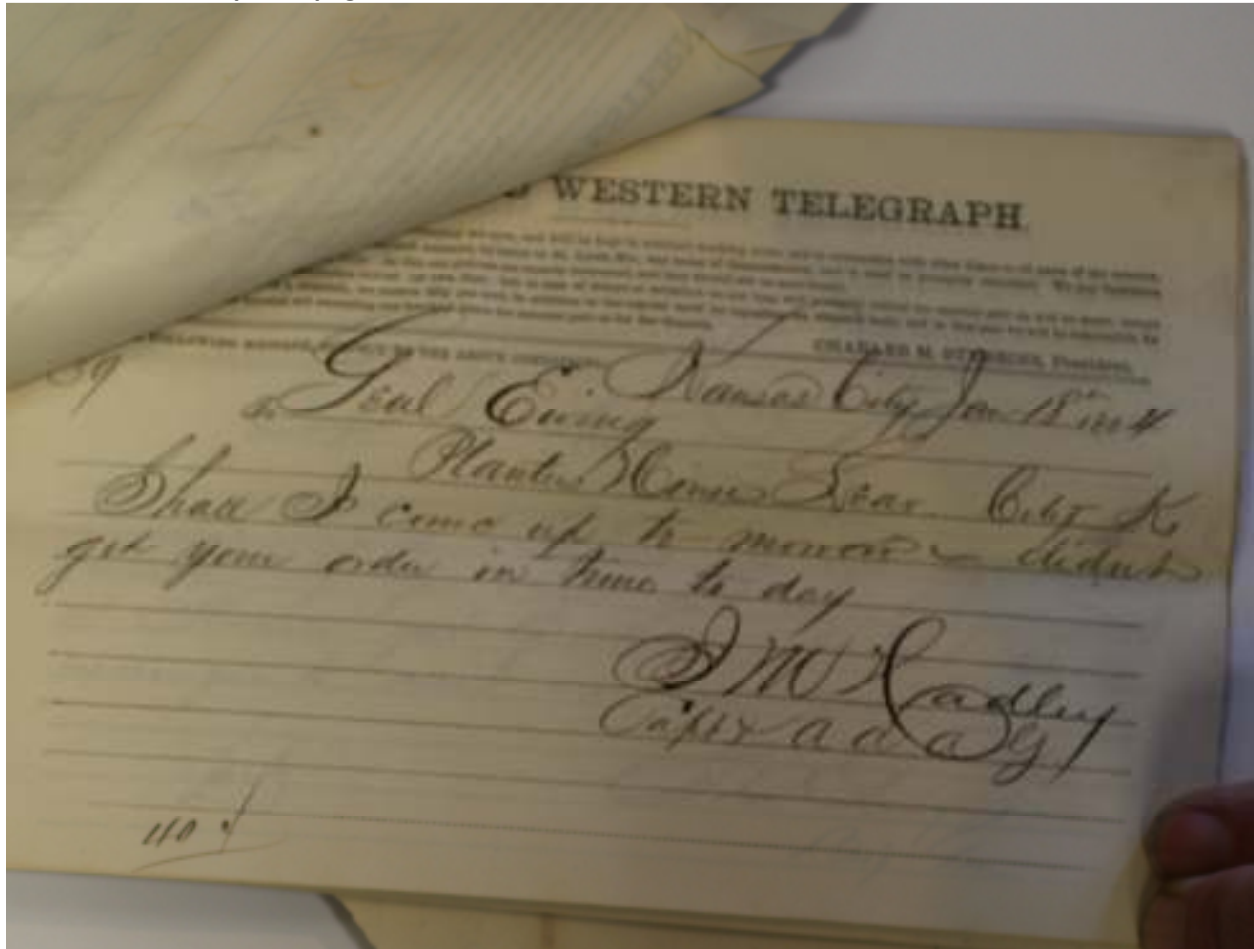
AAAG Kansas

You need not I will remain here several days

Thos Ewing Jr

Brig Gen

35 cts



39

Kansas City Jan 18 1864

To Genl Ewing

Planters House Leav City Ks

Shall I come up to morrow? Didn't get your order in time to day.

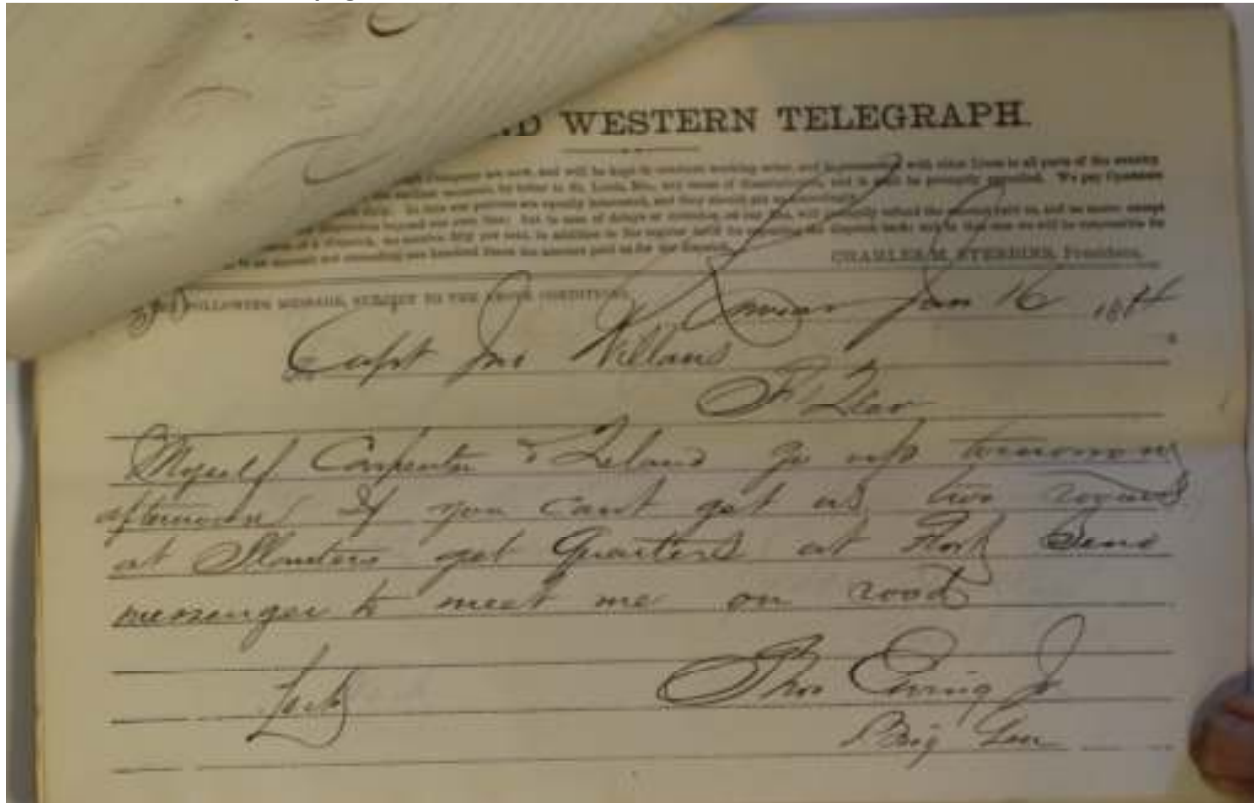
JM Hadley

Capt + AAAG

40c

[“Planter’s House – Leavenworth.” By Margaret Evelyn Whittemore. (b. 1897) ca. 1940. 9 1/8 x 7 1/4. Lithograph with hand color]





38

Kansas Jan 16 1864

To Capt Jno Willans
Ft Leav

Myself Carpenter + Leland go up tomorrow afternoon If you cant get us two rooms at Planters get Quarters at Fort Bend messenger to meet me on road

Thos Ewing Jr

.70 cts

Brig Gen

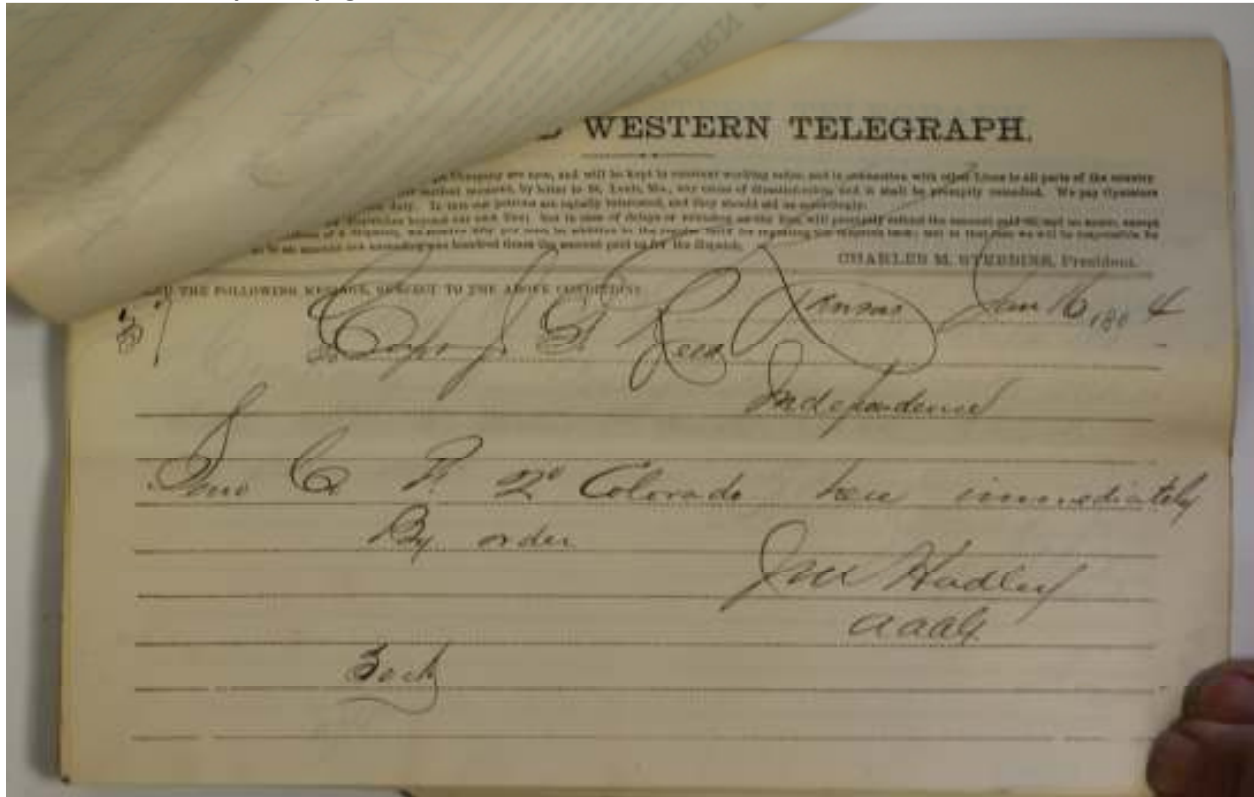
[Probably Major Seymour Carpenter, the border district's medical director. A childhood friend of General Ewing, they met on the battlefield at Prairie Grove and Ewing asked for him when Ewing took over the border. Carpenter was the surgeon in charge at the Battle of Pilot Knob under Ewing.]



Dr. SEYMOUR D. CARPENTER,
Lieutenant-Colonel,
in the War for the Union,
Medical Director of the
Department of Missouri, 1865.

[Picture left – Carpenter from Battle of Pilot Knob SHS Digital Collection & Picture Bottom - Leland from Kansas Historical Society -- From Quantrill and the Border Wars by William Elsey Connelly: Cyrus Leland, Jr... entered the Union army as a private soldier in August, 1861, being assigned to the Fourth Kansas. In 1862 the Third and Fourth regiments were consolidated, and became the Tenth Kansas. He was made a first lieutenant, and at Prairie Grove commanded his company... In 1863 he was detailed as aide-de-camp on the staff of General Ewing. In 1864, while still in the army, the people of Doniphan county elected him a member of the legislature of 1865.]





37

Kansas Jan 16 1864

To Capt J G. Rees
Independence

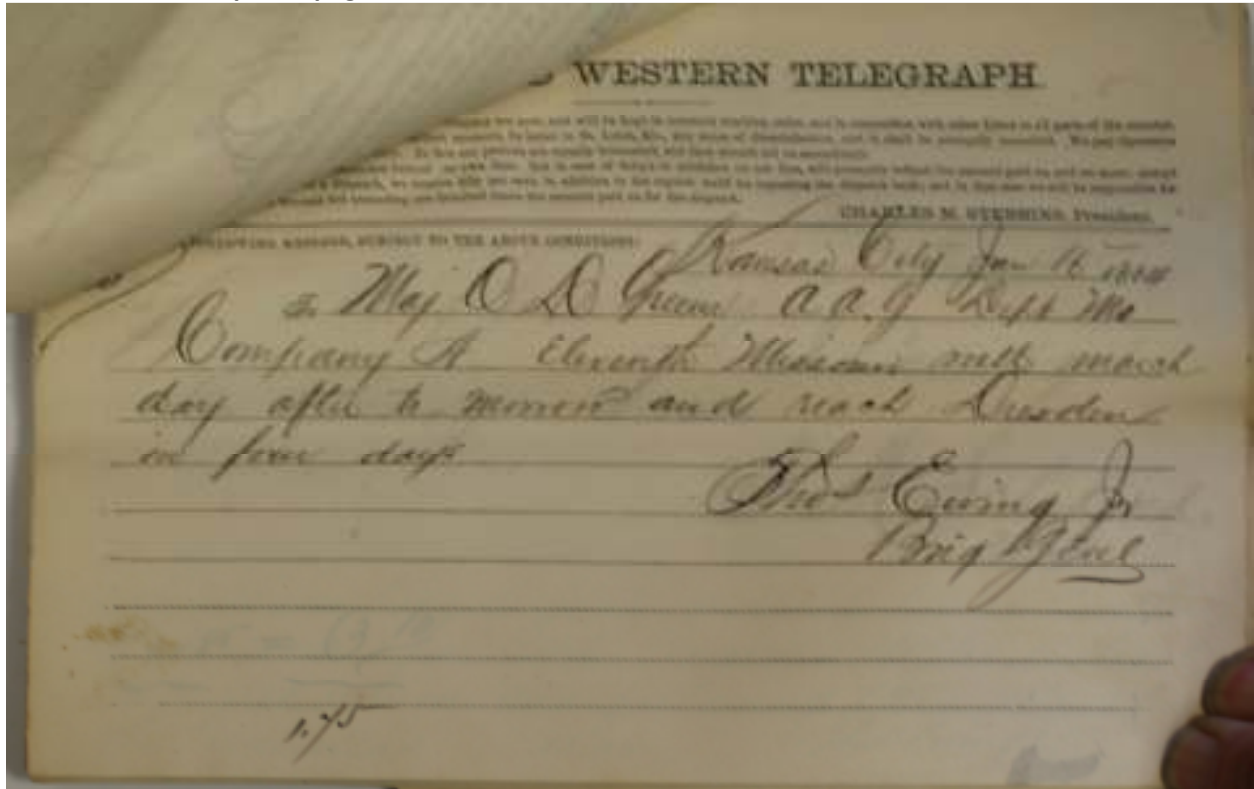
Send Co F 2d Colorado here immediately

By order

JM Hadley

AAAG

30cts



36

Kansas City Jan 16 1864

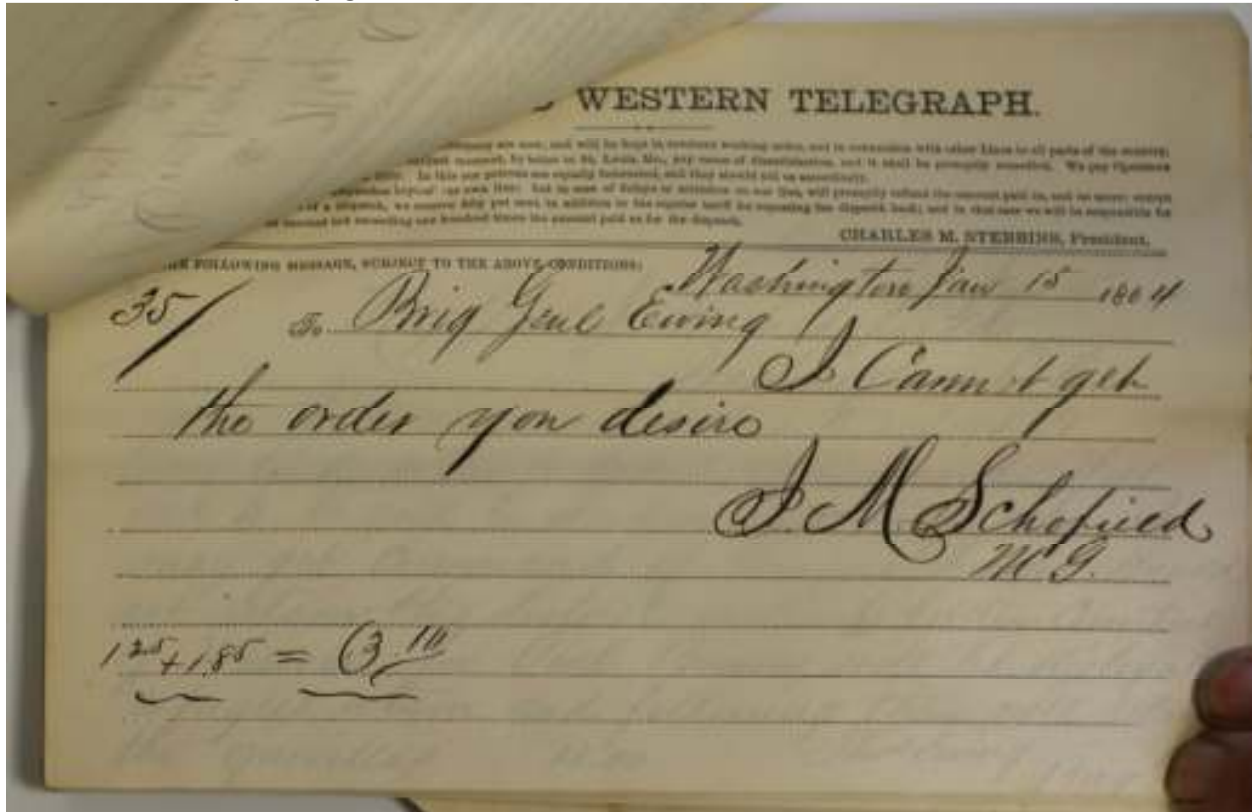
To Maj O D Greene AAG Dept Mo

Company A Eleventh Missouri will march day after to morrow and reach Dresden in four days

Thos Ewing Jr

Brig Genl

1.75



35

Washington Jan 15 1864

To Brig Genl Ewing

I cannot get the order you desire

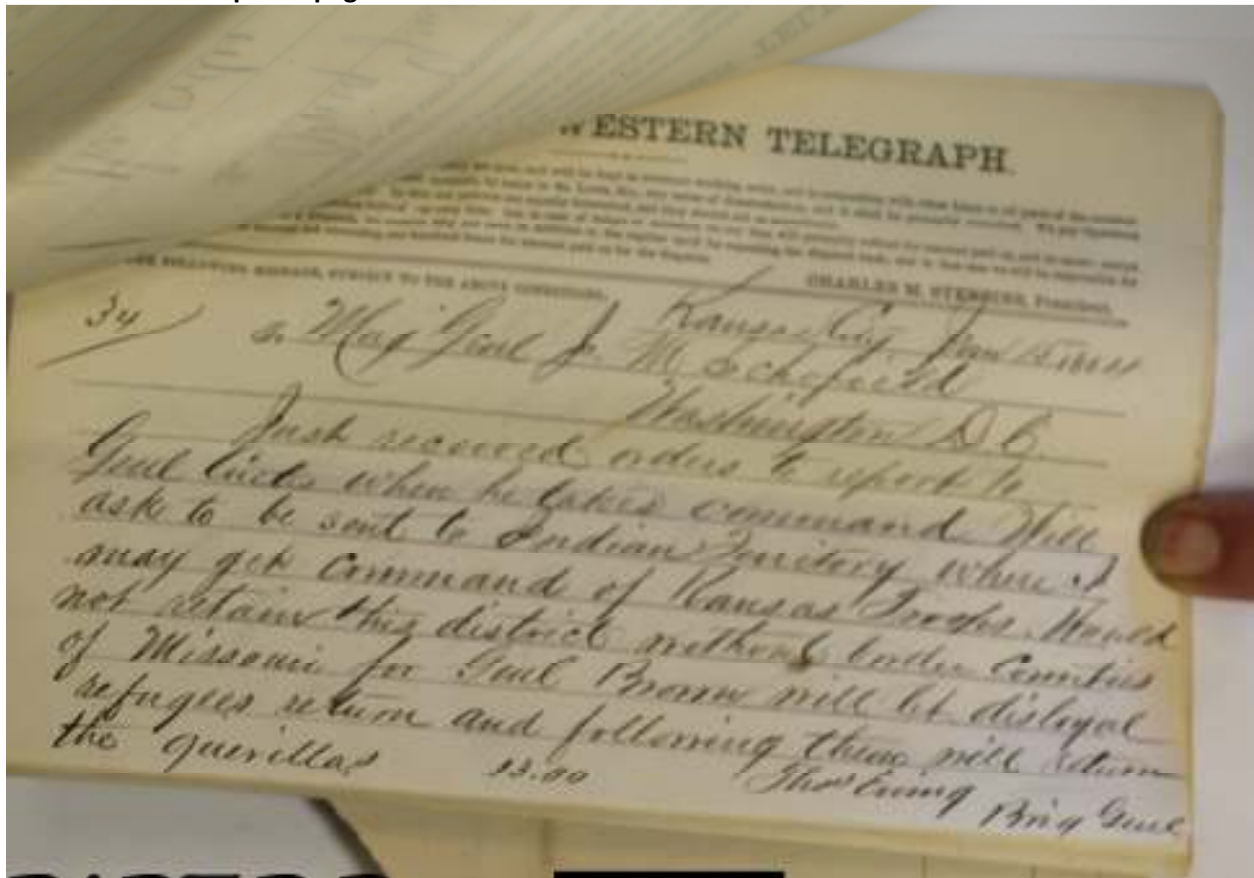
J M Schofield

MG.

1.25+1.85=3.10

[Major General John McAllister Schofield served most of his Civil War career in Missouri. He was with General Lyon when he fell at Wilson's Creek. He ultimately became commanding general of the Dept. of Missouri and served in that capacity until Spring of 1864 when he was transferred east under General Sherman. After the war, he served in several posts, ultimately becoming a lieutenant general commanding the U.S. Army. Picture is from Wilson's Creek NPS.]





34

Kansas City Jan 15 1864

To Maj Genl J.M. Schofield

Washington D.C.

Just received orders to report to Genl Curtis when he takes command. Will ask to be sent to Indian Territory where I may get command of Kansas Troops. Would not retain this district without border counties of Missouri for Genl Brown will let disloyal refugees return and following them will return the guerillas.

Thos Ewing

Brig Genl

13.00



[General Egbert Brown served throughout the war in the trans-Mississippi. While some considered his performance below par, he successfully defended Springfield, MO in 1863 against General John S. Marmaduke. Ewing was correct in his assumption that General Brown would rescind much of General Orders, No. 11 and allow people to return to the border, but Ewing was wrong for 1864 saw the guerillas move much of their operations away from the devastated district and into central Missouri]

