

Collection #  
M 0555,  
F 1668

**DANIEL H. PRUNK  
PAPERS, 1862–1970 (BULK 1862–1867)**

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Processed by

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18 September 1990

Revised 19 April 2002  
Updated 15 April 2004

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**COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF  
COLLECTION: 1 box, 1 reel microfilm

COLLECTION  
DATES: Inclusive, 1862–1970; bulk, 1862–1867

PROVENANCE: Rudolf K. Haerle, 8140 Township Line Road, Apt. 3310,  
Indianapolis, IN 46260

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1990.0342

NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Daniel H. Prunk (1829–1923) was born near Fincastle, Botetourt County, Virginia. His family later moved to Hennepin, Illinois, where he attended college at Mt. Palatine, Illinois, for one year and entered Rock River Seminary. From 1853–1856 he attended and was graduated from Eclectic Medical Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. Prior to moving to Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1861, he practiced medicine in Cincinnati; Rockford, Illinois; and Princeton, Illinois.

In September 1861, Prunk was appointed Assistant Surgeon in the 19th Indiana serving at the Marshall House Hospital in Alexandria, Virginia. Apparently his wife's poor health resulted in his return to Indianapolis in February 1862. Four months later, he was appointed to the position of assistant surgeon with the 20th Indiana at Harrison's Landing, where he became ill and spent several months in a hospital in New York. Dr. Prunk was then assigned to the 3rd Corps Hospital in New York. In March 1863, Dr. Prunk was dismissed from the army for falsifying disability discharges for soldiers in return for money.

Prunk was apparently reinstated around July 1863, and was assigned as Acting Assistant Surgeon at the 2nd Division Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. At that time he became a specialist in the embalming and the returning of deceased Union soldiers to their homes. He discovered a new preservative and disinfectant that apparently improved the embalming process. Prunk then became a licensed embalmer and operated several embalming centers in Tennessee and Georgia. Since the Union Army did not pay for the embalming and the return of its dead, Prunk was able to operate these centers as private businesses. In addition to his embalming business, Prunk and a Captain Armstrong also dealt in the produce and cotton business in the Nashville-Chattanooga area, as well as loaning money to officers and enlisted men.

Prunk sold his embalming establishments after the war and returned to Indianapolis in early 1866 at which time he resumed his medical practice. Apparently there was some questioning of Prunk's credentials; he took a course at the College of Physicians and Surgeons and was graduated from that institution in 1876 and resumed his practice.

Sources:  
*Pictorial and Biographical Directory of Indianapolis and Marion County* (1893), pp. 59-61 (photocopy in folder 2 of the collection).  
Edward C. and Gail R. Johnson, "A Civil War Embalming-Surgeon" *The Director*, January 1970, pp. 11–12 (photocopy in folder 2 of the collection).

Information regarding dismissal from service located in photocopies of Prunk's military record donated with collection.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers contains Prunk's correspondence and daybook for the period of 1862–1912, although the majority of the items are from 1862–1867 and deal with his medical career during the Civil War. The correspondence includes petition and letters of support for Prunk's embalming license in Tennessee as well as some financial records and correspondence from those who requested his services.

The daybook contains miscellaneous financial entries as to the cost of materials, embalming and return charges for Union soldiers, loans made, money owed, and other related financial matters.

There is also a folder of photocopies of Prunk's military record (including his dismissal from the army for falsifying records) and some biographical information.

## CONTENTS

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Correspondence and records, 1862–1902	Box 1, Folder 1
Photocopies of records and biographies, 1862–1970	Box 1, Folder 2
Daybook, 1865–1912	Box 1, Folder 3
Microfilm of collection	F 1668

## CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://157.91.92.2/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0555).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.