

Collection #
P 0474

ROBERT GORDON ALBUM, CA. 1868, 1906

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Processed by

Barbara Quigley
9 January 2006

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 small carte-de-visite album
COLLECTION DATES:	Ca. 1868, 1906
PROVENANCE:	Fred Jolly of Muncie, Indiana, June 2001.
RESTRICTIONS:	None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2001.0775

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL SKETCH

On Wednesday evening, 10 June 1868, a presentation of allegorical tableaux entitled *The Drummer Boy, or the Battle of Shiloh* opened at the Metropolitan Theater in Indianapolis. Two hundred veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic, assisted by more than a hundred women of the city, produced this show for the benefit of the widows and orphans of deceased soldiers. Tickets were sold at Benham Bros. & Co.'s music store for fifty cents for general admission, seventy-five cents for reserved seats, and five dollars for private boxes. The show ran nightly from 10–19 June, closing with a matinee on Saturday, 20 June, to benefit the Indianapolis Orphan Asylum.

The tableaux included scenes of the Battle of Shiloh, the Andersonville prison, the funeral of the murdered drummer boy, and music. A newspaper article recalling the production thirty-eight years later referred to it as the “most successful theatrical performance ever known in the city.” The actors included major-generals, brigadier generals, colonels, and captains. The most prominent character in the cast was “Uncle Joe” portrayed in blackface by Captain Harry McMullen. All of the performers, with the exception of the author of the play, Samuel J. Muscroft, and the boy who portrayed the drummer boy, were Indianapolis residents.

This series of tableaux appears to have been a forerunner of Muscroft's play, *The Drummer Boy of Shiloh*, written in 1870. The play, which was a mix of drama and comedy, was staged in cities and towns all over the Northern states for almost forty years. It was ordinarily staged with hometown actors rather than professionals—a factor that tended to increase its popularity. Contemporary accounts say that the play was second in popularity only to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Robert Gordon, from Henry County, Indiana, mustered into the 36th Indiana Infantry, Company A, as a corporal on 23 October 1861. He mustered out as a sergeant on 21 September 1864. He was living in Indianapolis in 1868 and portrayed a soldier named Tom Elliott in the tableaux described above.

Henry “Harry” McMullen was born in Ohio around 1838. In 1860 he was working as a hotel clerk in Terre Haute, Indiana. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the 11th Indiana Infantry, Company C, on 31 August 1861. He was promoted to first lieutenant on 30 April 1862, to adjutant on 13 November 1862, and to captain on 18 May 1864. He mustered out 11 January 1865.

Samuel J. Muscroft was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on 19 January 1838 to immigrants from Sheffield, England. He enlisted in the 102nd Ohio Infantry in Mansfield, Ohio, on 6 August 1862. It appears that he was also in the 189th Ohio Infantry at some point. He married Mrs. E. Baker, daughter of John Hull, Sr., on 17 May 1875, and raised three daughters: Nellie Maria, Jessie Luelle, and Georgia May.

Sources:

Items in the collection.

Adjutant General's Office. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana*. Indianapolis: A.H. Connor [etc.] State Printer, 1865-69. Vols. II and V. Reference Room Collection: [E506.2.I39 T4 1865](#)

Madison Township [Richland County, Ohio] Biographical Sketches (<http://www.heritagepursuit.com/Richland/RichlandMadison.htm>). Accessed 4 January 2006.

National Park Service. "Civil War Soldiers & Sailors System" (<http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/index.html>). Accessed 4 January 2006.

National Park Service. "Shiloh National Military Park" (http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/hh/10/hh10h.htm). Accessed 4 January 2006.

U.S. Census, 1860 and 1870 (<http://www.heritagequestonline.com>). Accessed 4 January 2006.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of one small carte-de-visite photograph album/scrapbook from the post-Civil War era that was in very fragile condition but has been rebound and repaired. The photographs include one portrait of Robert Gordon, who had fought with the 36th Indiana Infantry, and fourteen photographs of scenes from a presentation of tableaux entitled *The Drummer Boy, or the Battle of Shiloh*, which was staged in Indianapolis in June 1868. The actors in these tableaux included two hundred veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic. Robert Gordon is pictured in nine of the fourteen scenes in this album. The production's author, Samuel J. Muscroft, is pictured in two of the scenes included in this album. The other actors shown are Eugene Tylor, Lafe Robinson, Captain Henry "Harry" McMullen, and Will David Jobson. The production was staged as a benefit for widows and orphans of deceased soldiers. A 1906 newspaper article recalling the event is glued into the album. Some, if not all, of the photographs were produced by Gordon & Wilson's Indianapolis Photographic Temple of Art that was located at 36 ½ East Washington Street.

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Inside front cover of album: newspaper article glued into album—"Old Reporter's Reminiscences / Notable Presentation of 'The Drummer Boy, or the Battle of Shiloh,' By Citizens of Indianapolis. / 200 War Veterans and 100 Women in the Cast / Most Successful Theatrical Performance Ever Known in the City—Army Officers Who Won Fame in Battle Scenes Portrayed." This article was printed ca.

CONTAINER

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1906, and includes a reprint of the 1868 advertisement for the “Allegorical Tableaux! The Drummer-Boy or the Battle of Shiloh!” The newspaper clippings cover four pages in the small album, and include the cast of characters. In the lower right-hand corner of the fourth page is an “Abe Martin” cartoon.

The next page in the album is covered with patriotic symbols representing the U.S. flag and Grand Army of the Republic.

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The first page with a frame holding a carte-de-visite shows Robert **Gordon** in a suit, seated and leaning on a table with a hat on it. Below the photograph the frame is signed “Yours Respectfully Robert Gordon, Tom Elliott in Drummer Boy.” On the right side of the frame is signed “Yours respectfully, until Death / Robert Gordon Sargt Co A. 36th Ind Vols.” Glued to the top of the frame is a small newspaper clipping: “‘Why do you waste your time lounging in the streets?’ demanded the missionary-minded gentleman of the hobo. ‘Don’t you know time is money?’ / ‘Don’t you believe it, boss,’ came the answer. ‘I’ve done time enough to be a millionaire.’”

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The second carte-de-visite shows Robert **Gordon** standing, wearing a hat, his shirt has been hand-colored blue, his pants are tucked into his boots, and his coat is draped over his left arm. Signed on the frame below the photograph is “Robt Gordon as Tom Elliott, going to Town to enlist / Act 1st Drummer Boy.” Glued to the top of the frame is a small newspaper clipping: “Ther hain’t much difference between bein’ in th’ hands o’ your friends er th’ hands of a receiver. It’s great t’ live on a farm where you don’t have t’ buy nothin’ but sugar an’ indigo.”

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The third carte-de-visite shows Robert **Gordon** standing with his arms folded, wearing a hand-colored blue military uniform including hat and a sword hanging at his side. Signed on the frame below the photograph is “Tom Elliott Sargt Co D / Act 2d Drummer Boy.” Glued to the top of the frame is a small newspaper clipping: “Mrs. B.—Is she a Mary of the vine-clad cottage? / Mrs. M.—No, a Martha of the rubber-plant flat.”

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The fourth carte-de-visite shows Robert **Gordon** sitting on the ground with his legs stretched out before him. His uniform is hand-colored blue, and there is red hand-coloring to indicate blood on his

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leg and head. His boots, hat, and sword are on the ground beside him. There is a painted backdrop. This is a horizontal cdv, signed on the right side of the frame below the photograph is "Tom Elliott wounded on Shiloh Battle Field / Act 4 Drummer Boy." Glued to the top of the frame is a small newspaper clipping: "We used to say, 'Good things come in small packages'; nowadays everything does."

The fifth carte-de-visite shows Robert **Gordon** standing, wearing torn dark pants and a light shirt, with his hand by his face, looking to his right. Signed on the frame below the photograph is "Tom Elliott in Andersonville stok[ade?] / Act 5 Drummer Boy." Glued to the top of the frame is a small newspaper clipping: "'Don't seem to be any abandoned farms in Indiana.' / 'No, but if you are thinking of writing a novel I can furnish you with an abandoned plot.'"

The sixth carte-de-visite shows Robert **Gordon** seated at a table, wearing a hand-colored blue uniform, with his hat in his hand. Signed on the frame below the photograph is "Tom Elliott on Furlough / Act 6th Drummer Boy."

The seventh carte-de-visite shows Robert **Gordon** standing, leaning to his left, with his right hand on his hip and his left hand holding the tail of his hand-colored blue coat. There is a pipe in his mouth, and on his face the photograph has been hand-colored pink and drawn on with black ink. Signed on the frame below the photograph is "Tom Elliott on furlough At Masqurade Ball Indianapolis."

The eighth carte-de-visit is horizontal, and shows Robert **Gordon** (as Tom Elliott), Samuel J. **Muscroft** (as Mart Howard), Master Eugene **Tylor** (as Johnny Howard, the Drummer Boy of Shiloh), and Lafe **Robinson** (as Will Smith) all standing, wearing torn clothing. Signed on the right side of the frame below the photograph is "Tom Elliott, Mart Howard, Johnny Howard, Will Smith in Andersonville Stockade / Act [?] Drummer Boy."

The ninth carte-de-visite shows Robert **Gordon** standing in torn dark pants and a light shirt, with his right hand to his face, looking to his right. Signed on the frame above the photograph is "Robt Gordon." Signed on the frame below the photograph is "Tom Elliott in search of the surest rout to suicide."

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The tenth carte-de-visite shows a man in blackface (“Uncle Joe” portrayed by Captain Harry **McMullen**) standing, holding a tray and serving a hand-colored red drink to a seated man wearing a suit (“Frank Rutledge” portrayed by W.D. **Jobson**). Signed on the frame below the photograph is “Before the War. Uncle Joe and Frank Rutledge.”

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The eleventh carte-de-visite shows two men facing left: W.D. **Jobson** (as Frank Rutledge) is wearing a uniform with sword at his side; following behind him, somewhat stooped over is Harry **McMullen** (as Uncle Joe). Signed on the frame below the photograph is “Frank Rutledge and Uncle Joe / Ise guine to hal dem papas suh.” Some red and yellow hand-coloring on photograph.

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The twelfth carte-de-visite shows W.D. **Jobson** (as Frank Rutledge) with Harry **McMullen** (as Uncle Joe) grabbing him on the arm from behind. Signed on the frame below the photograph is “Gib Me dem papas, or ile smash you sesesh bugle all on you face / Frank Rutledge and Uncle Joe.”

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The thirteenth carte-de-visite is horizontal and shows Harry **McMullen** (as Uncle Joe) aiming a gun at W.D. **Jobson** (as Frank Rutledge) who is leaning away and holding his sword. Signed on the right side of the frame above the photograph is “Uncle Joe and Frank Rutledge.” Signed on the left side of the frame below the photograph is “You had better keep cool, for dis Nigga haint forgot ebbah ting suh.”

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The fourteenth carte-de-visite is horizontal and shows Harry **McMullen** (as Uncle Joe) perched on a high stool leaning on a table with W.D. **Jobson** (as Frank Rutledge) sitting in a chair across the table from him. Signed on the right side of the frame below the photograph is “Negro Equality / Frank Rutledge & Uncle Joe / Harry McMullin / Will David.”

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The fifteenth carte-de-visite is horizontal and shows Lafe **Robinson** (as Will Smith) squatting, holding the head of Eugene **Tylor** (as Johnny Howard, the drummer boy) who is lying on his back on the ground, Robert **Gordon** (as Tom Elliott) standing over the body of Samuel J. **Muscroft** (as Mart Howard) who is also lying on the ground. Signed on the left side of the frame below the photograph is “Will Smith, Johny Howard, Mart Howard, and Tom Elliott / Mart Howard swoons dead away on hearing of Johnnies being found dead on the Battle field.”

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The next page has a blue card glued to it with the words "Who's Your Friend?" and illustrations of two baseball players and a goat glued to the card.

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The next page contains a little collage, glued to the inside back cover of the album, with the words "Drummer Boy! Robt. Gordon. Co. A 36 Ind Vols. Membership Ticket. Admit Bearer Tom Elliott To Stage." Illustrations include an airplane, four children, a Grand Army of the Republic emblem, a crown, and the words "Drummer Boy" and "Gordon."

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Enlarged photocopy of newspaper article glued into front cover and next page of album.

Folder in Album Storage,
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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://opac.indianahistory.org/>
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, P 0474).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.