3 Books of Sketches of Camp Life

£1,250



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REF: 83505

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Height: 17.14 cm (6.7")

Width: 25.39 cm (10")

Depth: 3.81 cm (1.5")

Description

Three, part leather bound books containing 119 photographs mounted on card of Sketches of Camp Life depicting the 5th Cheshire Rifle Volunteers.

It is evident from 2 loose cards that the life size photographs are of original sketches drawn on stamp postcards. These were sent to 'The Officer Commanding, 5th Cheshire R.V. Somerford Camp, Congleton' between 1872 and 1890. The start date coincides with Lieutenant Colonel Sir Charles Shakely, Commanding Officer of the battalion, offering Somerford Park for The Annual Drill and Sham Fight.

The soldiers were to go under canvas in order that they could train for a week, rather than just 2 hours as before. It seems that this change led to the start of the cards with the artist seeing the humour in the 5th adapting to camp life. It also led to a host of regulations for the Hospital and Mess Tents etc. which all gave opportunities for the artist.

The photographs are fixed one to a page, except for a few pages in the third album which have 2. Some cards are individual subjects and some are part of a series such as Ideas of Comfort in Camp, Camp Nightmare, Camp Pottery and Why not eat Insects. Often the cards have explanatory notes such as: Camp Nightmares - The Lieutenant. That the object of his affections is gazing at him with beaming countenance, as he marches past. - when he awakens to the above unpleasant reality. The card shows a yew looking at him sleeping in his tent; Camp Nightmares - The Mess President. That The Colonel has invited 529 guest to lunch tomorrow & this is all he has to set before them. The picture shows a half-eaten ham and 3 fish.

Although the majority of the cards are humorous, the 1st album also has 4 portraits of officers and the 2nd a memorial to officers. For those interested in camp equipage, a number of sketches show the interior of tents with items such as chests, portable beds, a hip bath, a tent pole strap and tables illustrated.

The albums, by repute, came from the estate sale of the Heath family. They were owners of GH Heath & Co., Silk Throwers of Maccelsfield. 2 Heath brothers, George Noel and Geoffrey, were in the 5th but at a later date. Although most cards are initialled to the bottom right corner, they are difficult to read. However, one sketch (the last image) from 1884, entitled Ye Artist's Despair - The Week before Camp, shows a female artist sat at a table opposite her husband. Whoever drew the sketches had a good knowledge of the camp and its day to day life. It is possible the artist was the wife of an officer of the regiment. The camp had many visitors whether for lunch or to spectate. It seems that before the sketches were sent to The Commanding Officer, these photographs were taken as copies and later bound into these 3 albums.

The albums offer a fascinating insight to a militia regiment over an 18 year period at the end of the 19th century. Dated 1872 to 1890.

The size for each album is given. The size of each card is H 3 W 4 3/4 inches.

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