



Petroleum V. Nasby Letters

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

The Nasby Letters were written by David Ross Locke, editor of several 19th century Ohio newspapers, including the Hancock Jeffersonian and the Toledo Daily Blade. Locke strongly supported the Union and opposed slavery and created the pseudonym Reverend Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby to garner support for the Union cause. Nasby was a Copperhead and Democrat who, despite vehemently defending the South, provided little active support for the Confederacy. The letters, written from the perspective of this bigoted, lazy, illiterate, and drunken character, relied heavily on irony and gained Locke a national reputation. Eventually, they were published by Republican newspapers all over the Union, and even Abraham Lincoln was known to occasionally quote them to his cabinet members. After the Civil War ended, the Nasby Letters were used to comment on the Reconstruction, portraying former Confederates in a negative and Republicans in a positive light. Several collections of these letters, sometimes illustrated by Thomas Nast, were published both during and after Locke's lifetime.

Important Dates

- April 25, 1862: David Ross Locke publishes the first Nasby letter in the Hancock Jeffersonian.
- 1862: Nasby letters began to be published in other newspapers, such as the Cincinnati Commercial, and their popularity spreads.
- 1864: The Nasby Papers, a collection of Nasby letters, is published.
- October 1865: Locke begins to work for the Toledo Blade.
- 1867: Ekkoes from Kentucky is published.
- December 26, 1887: The last Nasby letter is written.
- February 15, 1888: David Ross Locke dies.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Search the following terms as an all word, phrase or 5-word proximity: Petroleum V Nasby, Mr Nasby, Nasby.
- Limit your search to pages published between 1862 and 1887 to find the actual letters rather than information about David Ross Locke and his Petroleum V. Nasby character.
- Narrow your search more by using specific date ranges to find articles relating his opinion about events.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Letter from a Straight Democrat](#)" *Hancock Jeffersonian* (Findlay, OH), April 25, 1862, Image 2, col. 2.
- "[Mr. Nasby Preaches](#)" *Gallipolis Journal* (Gallipolis, OH), December 17, 1863, Image 1, col. 5-6.
- "[Mr. Nasby Endorses...](#)" *Xenia Sentinel* (Xenia, OH), September 20, 1864, Image 1, col. 4-5.
- "[Mr. Nasby Ordains a Missionary Church uv the New Dispensashun](#)" *Hancock Jeffersonian* (Findlay, OH), March 25, 1865, Image 3, col. 1.
- "[Mr. Nasby Dreams a Dream...](#)" *Tiffin Tribune* (Tiffin, OH), June 6, 1872, Image 4, col. 1.
- "[Petroleum V. Nasby. How His Writings Helped the Union Cause](#)" *Salt Lake Herald* (Salt Lake City, UT), March 4, 1888, Image 14, col. 2-3.