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REAL ARCHIVAL FILE — This report reads the genuine War-Department disloyalty investigation of the Rev. Dr. Isaac W. K. Handy, a Virginia clergyman held at Fort Delaware in 1863–64, a public record of the United States National Archives (the Turner-Baker Papers, RG 94, microfilm M797). Dr. Handy published his own account of the imprisonment in 1874. It is published as a demonstration of the report itself.

A CIVIL WAR DISLOYALTY INVESTIGATION REPORT

Rev. Dr. Handy (given name not stated in file)

Reverend / civilian clergyman (styled "Rev. Dr.")

Disloyalty investigation / application for release — Fort Delaware, 1863–1864 (Turner-Baker case 3681)

Family Keepsake Edition · Researcher-Reviewed

Prepared September 20, 2026

Every fact in this report is traced to the page that states it.

Prepared from the original War Department loyalty-investigation records (the Turner-Baker Papers) of the United States National Archives (Record Group 94, microfilm M797).

Rev. Dr. Handy (given name not stated in file)

Reverend / civilian clergyman (styled "Rev. Dr.")

Short Biography

The Reverend Doctor Handy was a clergyman from Portsmouth, Virginia, who traveled into Delaware with his family under a pass from Major General Dix. In 1863 a Wilmington newspaper item accused him of having been a chaplain in the Confederate army, and on that report General Tyler ordered his arrest; he was confined at Fort Delaware on a charge of disloyalty — specifically of having served as a rebel chaplain. His son-in-law, John D. Dilworth, wrote twice to Secretary of War Stanton insisting the charge was a libel and asking for a hearing and release. The fort's commandant, General Schoepf, offered release if Handy would take the oath of allegiance; Handy answered that he would "sooner rot in prison than do that," and Schoepf reported him a dangerous man who ought not to be released. When the War Department revisited the case a year later, in July 1864, its officers were still trying to establish where Handy was held and on what grounds; the file records that inquiry but stops before any final disposition.

The Story of Rev. Dr. Handy

This is a thin but vivid case file — a bundle of War-Department letters and telegrams rather than a stack of sworn affidavits — and it tells the story of a minister the government could not quite keep track of even while it held him.

Rev. Dr. Handy was, by his son-in-law's account, a clergyman from **Portsmouth, Virginia**, who "came on with his family by the warrant of a pass obtained from Maj. Gen. Dix to go & return" (p. 11). Once he was in Delaware, "some anonymous lying scribbler in one of the Wilmington papers charged that he had been or was a Chaplain in the rebel army and had escaped through our lines, which caused Gen. Tyler to order his arrest" (p. 11). He was taken up near **Bridgeville, Delaware**, and sent to **Fort Delaware**, confined there "on the charge of having served as a rebel chaplain" (p. 10).

The first push for his release came in the summer of 1863. On **July 29, 1863**, his son-in-law **John D. Dilworth** wrote directly to Secretary of War Stanton, pleading that Handy "is not nor never was a Chaplain in the Confederate army" and that it would be "a libel on Gen. Dix to suppose that he would grant a pass to go & return to any one in that position" (p. 11). A companion note the same day asked "an investigation of the case and release from imprisonment" (p. 10). Turner's office referred the matter to the commandant at Fort Delaware for investigation.

The commandant's answer, endorsed **August 4, 1863**, was blunt. **Brig. Gen. A. Schoepf** wrote that Handy "asked me to procure his release, upon which I stated that he should take the Oath of allegiance to the Government — his reply was, 'I sooner rot in prison than do that,' my opinion is he is a dangerous man and ought not to be released" (p. 10). That single line — Handy's refusal of the oath — is the heart of the file, and it is the subject speaking in his own recorded words.

Almost a year later the case surfaced again at the top of the department. On **July 21, 1864**, Secretary Stanton himself referred the case to Judge Advocate Turner "to report on what grounds Dr Handy is imprisoned and whether there is any objection to exchanging him" (p. 2), and endorsed it again "to ascertain whether Dr Handy is in Ft Delaware and on what grounds & report immediately" (p. 3). What

followed was a small comedy of bureaucratic confusion: the Old Capitol / Carroll Prison superintendent reported "there is no such prisoner as Rev'd Dr Handy in either prisons, nor has such person been in my custody" (p. 6), so Turner wired and wrote General Schoepf at Fort Delaware asking "if you have in your custody a man by name of Handy" and "what are the charges against him, by whom arrested and when" (p. 5, 8). Schoepf finally telegraphed back on **July 28, 1864** that he had "sent charges against Rev Mr Handy by mail June twenty sixth inst" (p. 9), and the office noted the answer confirming Handy "was confined at Fort Delaware on a charge of disloyalty" (p. 7).

And there the paper stops. The file records the accusation, Handy's defiant refusal of the oath, his family's appeals, and the department's belated effort to pin down the facts — but it does **not** contain a final order releasing, exchanging, or continuing to hold him. The mailed charges Schoepf refers to are not in this jacket. What we have is an investigation caught mid-stream, not a resolution.

Nature of the record

This is a **War-Department loyalty / disloyalty investigation case file — Turner-Baker case No. 3681**, "Rev. Dr. Handy — Application for his release" (p. 1) — part of NARA Microfilm Publication **M797**, *Case Files of Investigations by Levi C. Turner and Lafayette C. Baker*, Record Group **94** (p. 12).

It is **not a court-martial file** and not, in itself, a military-commission trial record. There is no convening order, no charges-and-specifications instrument, no plea, no court, no findings, and no sentence; the Articles of War and the Lieber Code do **not** govern it. The subject was held under **executive war power and martial law** — the framework by which persons suspected of disloyal practices were arrested and confined by military authority after disloyalty matters passed to the War Department in February 1862 and under Lincoln's proclamations of 1862. The file itself names the operative authority chain plainly: the arrest was ordered by a general (Tyler), the prisoner held by a fort commandant (Schoepf), and the case reviewed by the Secretary of War (Stanton) through his Judge Advocate (Turner). The proper outcome of such a file is an administrative disposition — oath, parole, release, continued confinement, or referral — not a verdict.

The documents span **July 1863 to July 1864** (with the source page added by Fold3 in 2010).

The subject

The subject is styled throughout only as "**Rev. Dr. Handy**" or "Rev'd Dr Handy" (pp. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). **His given name is never stated in this file** — see the research gaps.

What the file does establish about him:

- He was a **clergyman** — a "Reverend Doctor" — and, per his son-in-law, "from **Portsmouth, Va.**" (p. 11).
- He entered Delaware **with his family** under "a pass obtained from **Maj. Gen. Dix** to go & return" (p. 11).
- He was **arrested near Bridgeville, Delaware**, on the order of **Gen. Tyler**, and confined at **Fort Delaware** (pp. 10, 11).
- His son-in-law is **John D. Dilworth** of Bridgeville, Delaware (pp. 10, 11).

Prior or other military service: The file documents **no** Union military service. The only "service" at issue is the *accusation* that he had "served as a rebel chaplain" (p. 10) / had been "a Chaplain in the

rebel army" (p. 11) — an accusation his family flatly denies. There is no ACP or appointment matter in this file; he was a civilian clergyman, not a federal appointee whose commission was being gated.

The accusation and its basis

The charge, in the file's own words. The case office recorded it two ways:

- "...confined in **Fort Delaware on the charge of having served as a rebel chaplain**" (p. 10, endorsement summarizing Dilworth's petition, July 31, 1863).
- "Answer rec'd stating that **Dr Handy was confined at Fort Delaware on a charge of disloyalty**" (p. 7, docket note, July 1864).

The basis of the accusation. This file is unusual for a Turner-Baker case: it contains **no sworn accusatory affidavit** and **no named accuser who swore to Handy's disloyalty**. The Tier-1 basis test therefore cannot be applied to any accuser's oath here, because none is present in the jacket. What the file *does* record about where the accusation came from is entirely secondhand, from the exculpatory side:

- Per Dilworth, the origin was "**some anonymous lying scribbler in one of the Wilmington papers**" who "charged that he had been or was a Chaplain in the rebel army and had escaped through our lines, which caused **Gen. Tyler** to order his arrest" (p. 11).

So the **principal "accuser" is an unnamed newspaper writer**, and the arresting authority (Gen. Tyler) acted on that published report — which Dilworth characterizes as an imposition on a "gallant soldier" who "would not causelessly annoy or injure even an enemy" (p. 11). The actual charges Schoepf says he "sent by mail June twenty sixth" (p. 9) are **not in this file**, so the sworn or documentary substance behind the disloyalty charge cannot be read here.

Recorded is not established. The file proves an accusation was made and an arrest ordered on the strength of a newspaper item; it does **not** contain evidence proving Handy served as a Confederate chaplain.

The subject's response and his family's defense

Handy's own recorded position is short and defiant. Asked by the commandant to secure his release by swearing loyalty, he refused: "**I sooner rot in prison than do that**" (p. 10, quoted by Gen. Schoepf, Aug. 4, 1863). That refusal of the oath of allegiance is the pivotal act on the subject's side of the file — it is why the ordinary civilian disposition (oath, then release) never took effect.

The substantive defense is carried by his son-in-law, **John D. Dilworth** of Bridgeville, in two July 29, 1863 documents to Secretary Stanton. Dilworth swears — well, writes; these are **correspondence, not sworn affidavits** — that:

- Handy "**is not nor never was a Chaplain in the Confederate army**" (p. 11);
- Handy came into Delaware lawfully on Gen. Dix's pass, and it "seems... a libel on Gen. Dix to suppose that he would grant a pass to go & return to any one in that position" (p. 11);
- "If he could have a hearing he can satisfy any one that he has said nor done nothing since he came to Delaware to warrant his imprisonment" (p. 11);
- He asks Stanton's "sense of justice & humanity" to "make inquiries & order his speedy release" (p. 11).

Weighed on the same terms as any accusation: Dilworth is an **interested family member** ("My Son in Law"), and his knowledge of what Handy did before coming to Delaware is not shown to be firsthand — his denial of the chaplaincy is an assertion, not demonstrated proof. His account of the *pass from Dix* and the *newspaper origin of the charge*, however, is concrete and specific. Neither side of this file is corroborated by an independent sworn witness.

The action and disposition

What the government actually did, in sequence, from the file:

1. **Arrest and confinement** at Fort Delaware, on Gen. Tyler's order, on a charge of disloyalty / having served as a rebel chaplain (pp. 10, 11). 2. **1863 investigation referral:** Dilworth's petition was "Respectfully referred to commandant at Fort Delaware for investigation and report. By order of Sec of War" (p. 10, L.C. Turner, July 31, 1863). 3. **Commandant's report (disposition offered and refused):** Schoepf endorsed, Aug. 4, 1863 — quoted verbatim: "*Rev Dr Handy asked me to procure his release, upon which I stated that he should take the Oath of allegiance to the Government — his reply was, 'I sooner rot in prison than do that' my opinion is he is a dangerous man and ought not to be released.*" (p. 10). The oath-of-allegiance disposition was thus **offered and declined by the subject**. 4. **1864 review:** Stanton personally re-referred the case to Judge Advocate Turner to report "on what grounds Dr Handy is imprisoned and whether there is any objection to exchanging him" (p. 2), and again "to ascertain whether Dr Handy is in Ft Delaware and on what grounds & report immediately" (p. 3). Turner's inquiries produced Old Capitol Prison's report that no such prisoner was there (p. 6), then Schoepf's confirmation that Handy was at Fort Delaware and that charges had been mailed June 26 (pp. 7, 9).

No final disposition appears in this file. There is no order releasing, exchanging, paroling, or continuing to hold Handy, and no referral to a military commission. The mailed charges are not present. **The file goes silent after the July 1864 inquiry.** A disposition here would in any case be the government's action on a suspicion, not a court's verdict of guilt or innocence — and this file never reaches even that administrative endpoint within its pages.

Named people in the file

- **Rev. Dr. Handy** — the subject; clergyman from Portsmouth, Va.; confined at Fort Delaware (given name not in file).
- **Edwin M. Stanton** — Secretary of War; referred and re-referred the case (pp. 2, 3).
- **Levi C. (L.C.) Turner** — Associate/Major Judge Advocate, War Department; conducted the inquiries (pp. 2, 5, 8, 10).
- **Brig. Gen. A. Schoepf** — commanding officer, Fort Delaware; reported Handy's refusal of the oath and opinion he was "a dangerous man" (pp. 4, 9, 10). [*spelling flagged*]
- **John D. Dilworth** — Handy's son-in-law, of Bridgeville, Delaware; principal advocate for release (pp. 10, 11).
- **Gen. Tyler** — ordered Handy's arrest on the newspaper report (p. 11).
- **Maj. Gen. Dix** — granted the pass under which Handy entered Delaware (p. 11).
- **William P. Wood** — Superintendent, Old Capitol Prison (p. 6).
- **E. Keller** — Assistant Superintendent, Old Capitol Prison, who signed the "no such prisoner" reply (p. 6).
- **Mr. Rutherford** — addressee of the internal report note on p. 2 [*reading uncertain*].

- **"B. Reid" (?)** — notation on the July 28 telegram, p. 9 *[reading uncertain]*.

Documented negatives, source conflicts, research gaps, and the identity boundary

Documented negatives / conflicts within the record's own apparatus. - The Old Capitol / Carroll Prison superintendent reported that Handy was **not** in his custody (p. 6), while the true place of confinement was **Fort Delaware** (pp. 7, 9, 10). This is a search/location confusion resolved within the file, not a contradiction about the underlying facts.

What the file establishes: that an accusation of disloyalty (serving as a rebel chaplain) was made against a clergyman named Handy; that he was arrested near Bridgeville, Del., and confined at Fort Delaware; that he refused the oath of allegiance; and that both his family and the Secretary of War sought review of his case in 1863 and again in 1864.

What the file does NOT establish: whether Handy actually served as a Confederate chaplain (the substantive question was never adjudicated here); the actual documented charges (mailed June 26, 1864, but absent from this jacket, p. 9); and the ultimate outcome (release, exchange, or continued confinement).

Research gaps and identity boundary: - **Handy's given name is not in this file.** Confident identification of the specific man requires other records; do not assume an identity this jacket does not supply. - The **charges mailed June 26, 1864** (p. 9) are a referenced exhibit that is not present. - **No final disposition** is recorded; the file stops mid-review. - Uncertain readings (Schoepf's surname spelling; "Mr. Rutherford"; "B. Reid") are flagged rather than resolved.

Artifacts in the File

The file holds more than paperwork. These pages are reproduced here exactly as they were filed — a caption beneath each tells you what the record itself says about it, and nothing more.

[Page 1 image unavailable — see the file itself]

Plate 1 — Case jacket cover (page 1). inscribed/captioned: "3681. Rev. Dr. Handy. Application for his release". Outer jacket of Turner-Baker case 3681, bearing case number and title.

[Page 11 image unavailable — see the file itself]

Plate 2 — Manuscript family petition letter (page 11). inscribed/captioned: "Bridgeville July 29th 1863 Hon E M Stanton Dear Sir". John D. Dilworth's autograph letter to Secretary Stanton defending his son-in-law; the fullest narrative document in the file.

[Page 10 image unavailable — see the file itself]

Plate 3 — Petition endorsement and commandant's report (page 10). inscribed/captioned: "Post Delaware August 4/63 ... A Schoepf Brig Genl Comg". Contains Handy's quoted refusal of the oath and Schoepf's opinion he is a dangerous man.

Document Inventory

Page	Document Type	Summary
1	Case jacket / cover	Outer jacket: "3681. Rev. Dr.

		Handy. Application for his release." Case number and title.
2	War-Department referral / report sheet	July 21, 1864: Case of Rev. Dr. Handy (Old Capitol / Ft. Delaware, Page 356 & 361, Vol. 3). Stanton refers to Major Turner to report on grounds of imprisonment and any objection to exchange; report note (to "Mr. Rutherford") that no such prisoner is at Old Capitol or Carroll Prison (see enclosures).
3	Endorsement on envelope	Stanton endorsement referring the matter back to Judge Advocate Turner to ascertain whether Dr Handy is at Fort Delaware and on what grounds, and to report immediately.
4	Docket/endorsement slip	Filing note: Brig. Gen. A. Schoepf, Comdg Ft. Delaware, July 22, 1864, about Rev. Dr. Handy; Page 356, Vol. 3; case 3681.
5	Official letter (War Department to Schoepf)	July 22, 1864: Turner (Judge Advocate), by order of the Secretary of War, asks Brig. Gen. Schoepf to report at once whether Handy is in his custody, the charges, by whom arrested, and when.
6	Official letter (Old Capitol Prison reply)	July 21, 1864: William P. Wood, Supt., per E. Keller, Asst. Supt. Old Capitol Prison, reports to Turner that there is no such prisoner as Rev. Dr. Handy in either prison, nor has such person been in his custody.
7	Docket/endorsement slip	Note re telegram to Gen. Schoepf, July 27, 1864: answer received stating Dr Handy was confined at Fort Delaware on a charge of disloyalty; answer sent to Sec. of War. Case 3681, Page 356, Vol. 3.
8	Telegram (War Department to Schoepf)	July 27, 1864: Turner, by order of the Secretary of War, asks Gen. Schoepf what the charges against Rev. Dr. Handy are, and when and by whom arrested; notes no answer to the letter of the 22d.
9	Telegram (Schoepf to Turner, U.S. Military Telegraph)	July 28, 1864: from Fort Delaware, Brig. Gen. A. Schoepf

		to L.C. Turner — "Sent charges against Rev Mr Handy by mail June twenty sixth inst." Endorsement note ("B. Reid"?).
10	Petition endorsement + commandant's report (1863)	Left: Dilworth (Bridgeville, Del., Jul 29/63) asks investigation and release of Rev. Doctor Handy, confined at Fort Delaware on the charge of having served as a rebel chaplain; referred to commandant for investigation (Turner, July 31, 1863). Right: Schoepf's endorsement (Post Delaware, Aug. 4, 1863) — Handy refused the oath ("I sooner rot in prison than do that"); opinion he is a dangerous man not to be released.
11	Letter (family petition to Stanton)	July 29, 1863: John D. Dilworth to Sec. of War Stanton — his son-in-law Rev. Dr. Handy, from Portsmouth, Va., arrested in Del. and sent to Fort Delaware after a Wilmington newspaper charged him with being a rebel chaplain; came in on Gen. Dix's pass; denies he ever was a Confederate chaplain; asks a hearing and speedy release.
12	Fold3 source-information page (navigation)	Source metadata: "3681 - Handy, Dr."; 11 images; Publication M797; NARA; RG 94; NARA Catalog 656620, "Case Files of Investigations by Levi C. Turner and Lafayette C. Baker, compiled 1862-1865."

Every Fact and Its Source

Each substantive fact in this report, with the document that states it. Tier 1 = sworn or own-hand documents; Tier 2 = official contemporaneous records; Tier 3 = claim-process paperwork; Tier 4 = administrative material. Notes mark facts a witness learned second-hand, values worked out by calculation, uncertain readings, and postings whose movement is documented but whose claimed activity is not independently confirmed.

Fact	Source document (page)	Tier	Notes
The subject is identified only as "Rev. Dr. Handy" / "Rev'd Dr Handy"; no given name	Case jacket and correspondence (p. 1)	4	—

appears in the file.			
Handy was a clergyman "from Portsmouth, Va." who came into Delaware with his family under a pass obtained from Maj. Gen. Dix "to go & return."	Letter, John D. Dilworth to E.M. Stanton (p. 11)	3	—
The accusation was that Handy "had been or was a Chaplain in the rebel army and had escaped through our lines"; his son-in-law states he "is not nor never was a Chaplain in the Confederate army."	Letter, John D. Dilworth to E.M. Stanton (p. 11)	3	source conflict
Record type: Turner-Baker case No. 3681, NARA M797, RG 94 — "Case Files of Investigations by Levi C. Turner and Lafayette C. Baker, compiled 1862-1865."	Fold3 source-information page (p. 12)	4	—
Handy was arrested near Bridgeville, Delaware, on the order of Gen. Tyler, prompted by an anonymous Wilmington newspaper item, and confined at Fort Delaware.	Letter, John D. Dilworth to E.M. Stanton (p. 11)	3	—
The charge in the file's own words: confined "in Fort Delaware on the charge of having served as a rebel chaplain."	Endorsement summarizing Dilworth petition (Turner, July 31, 1863) (p. 10)	2	—
Docket note: "Answer rec'd stating that Dr Handy was confined at Fort Delaware on a charge of	Case docket/endorsement slip, July 1864 (p. 7)	2	—

disloyalty."			
Dilworth's July 29, 1863 petition asking "an investigation of the case and release from imprisonment" was referred to the commandant at Fort Delaware for investigation and report, by order of the Secretary of War (L.C. Turner, Judge Advocate).	Endorsement, L.C. Turner (p. 10)	2	—
Gen. Schoepf reported (Aug. 4, 1863): "Rev Dr Handy asked me to procure his release, upon which I stated that he should take the Oath of allegiance to the Government — his reply was, 'I sooner rot in prison than do that' my opinion is he is a dangerous man and ought not to be released."	Commandant's endorsement, Brig. Gen. A. Schoepf (p. 10)	2	—
On July 21, 1864, Secretary Stanton referred the case to Major Turner to report on the grounds of imprisonment and whether there was any objection to exchanging Handy.	War-Department referral sheet (p. 2)	2	—
Stanton endorsed the case again to Judge Advocate Turner "to ascertain whether Dr Handy is in Ft Delaware and on what grounds & report immediately."	Endorsement on envelope (p. 3)	2	—
July 22, 1864: Turner, by order of the Secretary of	Official letter, L.C. Turner to Schoepf (p. 5)	2	—

War, wrote Brig. Gen. Schoepf asking whether Handy was in his custody and, if so, the charges, by whom arrested, and when.			
The Old Capitol / Carroll Prison superintendent's office reported (William P. Wood, per E. Keller) that "there is no such prisoner as Rev'd Dr Handy in either prisons, nor has such person been in my custody."	Official letter, Old Capitol Prison to Turner (p. 6)	2	—
July 28, 1864 telegram: Brig. Gen. A. Schoepf to L.C. Turner — "Sent charges against Rev Mr Handy by mail June twenty sixth inst." (the mailed charges are not present in the file).	U.S. Military Telegraph, Schoepf to Turner (p. 9)	2	—
The file records no final disposition — no order of release, exchange, or continued confinement — and goes silent after the July 1864 inquiry.	Case file (full) (p. 9)	4	—

Hard-to-Read Entries

These are original handwritten records, in places faded or damaged with age. Where a word could not be read with confidence, it is flagged here rather than guessed at - nothing in this report is invented. A researcher reviewed each entry below against the original scans; some were made out on a closer look, and the rest remain genuinely unclear.

- **Page 4** - flagged as hard to read (The commandant's surname is written in varying cursive across pages 4, 9, and 10 and is difficult to read consistently). A researcher re-checked it against the original scan; it remains genuinely unclear, which we note honestly.
- **Page 2** - flagged as hard to read (The addressee of the internal report note on p. 2 is a hurried signature/name that is only partly legible). A researcher re-checked it against the original scan; it remains genuinely unclear, which we note honestly.

- **Page 9** - flagged as hard to read (A short notation beneath Schoepf's July 28 telegram is only partly legible). A researcher re-checked it against the original scan; it remains genuinely unclear, which we note honestly.

What the File Does Not Establish

The file is silent on these points. No document states them, so the report says so rather than filling them in.

- **Page 1** - the file does not answer this (The subject is identified throughout only as "Rev. Dr. Handy"; no first name appears anywhere in the file). The Research Gaps section points to the records that might.
- **Page 9** - the file does not answer this (Schoepf states the actual charges against Handy were mailed on June 26, 1864, but that document is not present in this jacket). The Research Gaps section points to the records that might.
- **Page 9** - the file does not answer this (The file records the accusation, the refusal of the oath, family appeals, and the 1864 inquiry, but contains no order of release, exchange, or continued confinement). The Research Gaps section points to the records that might.

About this report: it was produced from the file provided, read page by page. It does not search records beyond that file - the Research Gaps section points to the outside records that could carry the story further.