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William Neilson Chunn papers

Title: William Neilson Chunn papers
Collection No: MSS.9
Creator: Chunn family
Extent: 0.25 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1847-1952 and undated

Abstract: The collection contains mostly family correspondence of William N. Chunn (1835-1930) of Humboldt, Tennessee.

Provenance: Purchased from Mattie Burkholder, July 1971.
Processed by: Michele Fagan, September 1988; Gerald Chaudron, March 2014.
Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: William Neilson Chunn papers, Department of Preservation and Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: March 2014

Biographical information

William Neilson Chunn was born on January 19, 1835, in Warm Springs (now Hot Springs), Buncombe (now Madison) County, North Carolina, the youngest of five children of Joseph Spencer (1804-1876) and Catherine Jane Neilson Chunn (1808-1859). Joseph was a farmer and prosperous merchant while his wife's father was a wealthy planter. The Chunn family moved to Tennessee and in 1861 William was working as a farmer when he enlisted as a private in Company D, Captain Johns Company, 6th Tennessee Infantry, at Somerville. He was promoted to 2nd lieutenant in Colonel Andrew Jackson's 1st Tennessee Heavy Artillery Regiment in May 1862. Chunn was captured at Vicksburg in July 1863 but paroled eight months later. The regiment was then sent to Fort Morgan, Alabama, in April 1864. On the fall of Fort Morgan in August, he was ordered to report to General Nathan B. Forrest and served as an artillery lieutenant with Morton's Battery. Chunn was recuperating from typhoid fever at his sister's home at Taylor's Chapel, Tennessee, when the war ended. Chunn resumed farming but a year after his return began merchandising in Humboldt, Tennessee, which continued until 1884 before returning to farming. He married Anna Elizabeth Transon (1853-1894) in 1873 and had two daughters, Mary and Sarah. William died on November 11, 1930.

Scope and contents

The collection contains 57 items, including family letters, mainly from Humboldt, Tennessee, with many references to religion and the deaths of family members. Three letters written in 1861 from Camp Brown, Tennessee, and Columbus, Kentucky, pertain to the Civil War. There are a few references to the post-Civil War education of daughters and parent/child relationships. The September 11, 1878, letter provides detailed information on quarantine regulations in Humboldt. The January 10, 1918, letter mentions Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, and aviators at Love Field. There is also a photograph of the Keith home in Athens, Georgia, genealogical information, including William Chunn's Civil War record, and newspaper clippings.

Subject terms

SUBJECTS:

Humboldt (Tenn.)

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Correspondence.

NAMES:

Chunn, William Neilson, 1835-1930.

Neilson family.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder

- 1 1847 August 11. Philip Hale Neilson, Warm Springs, N.C., to sister (Catherine Jane Chunn), Athens, Tenn.
An evangelical minister in Tennessee discusses religion and the dangers of sectarianism.
- 2 1849 April 4. Charles F. Keith, Athens, Tenn., to Catherine Chunn (niece), near Bolivar, Hardeman County, Tenn.
- 3 1856 October 24. Catherine D. Keith, Elmwood, Athens, Tenn., to cousin.
Writer's reaction to the death of a brother-in-law who accidentally swallowed poison; a sister's husband has also died. "Louisa had no control over herself whatever, and not the least resignation."
- 4 1857 January 20. L.I. R, Elmwood, Athens, Tenn., to cousin.
Woman, probably Louisa, writes about husband's death; describes how a sister's child accidentally set fire to himself and died of burns.
- 5 1858 September 7. Charles Ready, Murfreesboro, Tenn., to William M. Smith, Brownsville, Tenn.
Refers to land transactions in West Tennessee in 1821-1823.
- 6 1859 March 7. Philip Hale Neilson, New Market, Tenn., to sister and niece.
"You seem probable that you cannot live long. I believe and hope you are perfectly resigned to God's will..."
- 7 1859 May 10. Catherine D. Keith, Elmwood, Athens, Tenn., to Catherine J. Chunn, Somerville, Fayette County, Tenn.
- 8 1859 November 6. W.N. Chunn, Elmwood, to brother.
"Her husband died a wretched death, but the rest of the family who died left evidence of piece with God."
- 9 1861 May 30. W.N. Chunn, Camp Brown, Union City, Tenn., to sister.
"The South will not violate the armed neutrality of Kentucky by passing over her borders..." Also mentions troop buildups, rumors of moving to Cairo and the reaction to them.

- 10 1861 June 28. W.N. Chunn, Camp Brown, Union City, Tenn., to sister.
Discusses boxes of clothing and food received and arranges to have his black servant, Henry, sent to him.
- 11 1861 December 27. W.N. Chunn, Columbus, Ky., to brother-in-law.
Chunn writes about financial transactions he wants carried out and the arrangements to be made for blacks.
- 12 1871 September 15. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to sister.
On selecting a school for a daughter, "I hope Ella will not learn to pronounce cow & say 'I guess' as the Yankees do."
- 13 1873 July 19. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to sister.
- 14 1873 December 5. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Kate (niece)
- 15 1877 August 1. E.C. Yates, Brookston, Lamar County, Tex., to cousin.
Refers to father using sign language. "I often feel that it is best for me to have him with me, I can live a better christian his example is worthy of imitation,..."
- 16 1878 August 15. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to sister (Sarah Louise Taylor (1830-1904)).
- 17 1878 September 11. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to sister.
Assures sister that the family will move if fever appears but doubts that it will because of the strict quarantine. Describes town's preventative measures.
- 18 1881 February 21. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to sister.
- 19 1881 October 19. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to sister.
Sees evidence of divine providence when house is spared by a major fire.
- 20 1882 November 17. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Ella (niece).
- 21 1886 May 8. James Fentrop, Bolivar, Tenn., to Mrs. Lou Taylor, Taylors Chapel, Tenn.
- 22 1889 March 6. Sarah Louise. Taylor, Taylors Chapel, Tenn., to W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn.
- 23 1891 April 8. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise L. Taylor.
- 24 1894 August 2. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor.

- 25 1894 August 6. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor.
- 26 1894 August 7. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor.
- 27 1894 August 20. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor.
- 28 1894 September 7. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Katie and Mary (nieces).
- 29 1894 September 26. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor.
- 30 1896 December 10. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor.
- 31 1898 November 1. L.J. Rowland, Elmwood, Athens, Tenn., to cousin.
- 32 1898 November 2. S.D. Hale, Athens, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor, Taylors Chapel, Tenn.
Gives consolation on the death of a relative and discusses his religious views.
- 33 1903 April 28. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor.
Daughter Mary quits school to stay at home. Chunn wants her to continue her studies but “the school was such an indifferent affair...”
- 34 1904 April 25. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor.
- 35 1904 June 30. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sarah Louise Taylor.
Discusses the prospective visit of daughter Mary to a friend in St. Louis. “She needs a good deal of watching & restraining & when she...comes home with her mind filled with visions of elegance & fashion, which makes her discontented & unhappy...”
- 36 1905 January 22. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Robert Hobson (nephew)
(handwritten copy).
- 37 1905 August 27. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to brother.
- 38 1906 October 24. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Lois (niece Lois Taylor Hobson).
Religious views.
- 39 1907 February 7. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to brother.
Religious views.
- 40 1907 May 21. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to Sammie (nephew Samuel Taylor (1864-1932)).

Cold weather has damaged small fruit crops. Says "Perhaps it is for our good" and gives religious reasons. Daughter Mary earned \$10-\$15 dressmaking and then spent it on a hat and dress for a wedding she attended.

- 41 1907 October 13. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to brother.
- 42 1907 November 11. Charles L. Wilkinson, Clarksdale, Miss., to Rev. Robert V. Taylor, Taylors Chapel, Tenn.
Wants Taylor to marry him and Mary Chunn on November 27.
- 43 1909 May 5. W.N. Chunn, Humboldt, Tenn., to brother.
Discusses baptism of granddaughter
- 44 1917 June 13. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Norwood Ballow, Dallas, Tex., to Mary and Kate Taylor, Memphis, Tenn.
Announcement of birth of Robert, Jr.
- 45 1918 January 10. W.N. Chunn, Dallas, Tex., to brother.
On Southern Methodist University: "There are no enclosures around the buildings, and they look very lonesome..." On Love Aviation Field: "The papers note the deaths of some men of the Air Aspirants almost every day but this does not seem to dampen the ardor of those left alive due to the dare-devil loving? of the typical American spirit."
- 46 1919 February 21. Margaretta L. Wilkinson, Somerville, Tenn., to Anna Taylor.
Condolences on death of Robert Taylor.
- 47 Clipping: Memphis Press-Scimitar, 1936 July 2. Article on 142 year old stone home at Lime Stone, east Tennessee, built by Seth Smith for George Gillespie.
- 48 Clipping: Fayette Falcon, Somerville, Tenn., 1952 September ?. Article on meeting of Craddock Book Club featuring photograph of Lois Hobson, founder of the club in 1893.
- 49 18?? June 28. Catherine D. Keith, Elmwood, Athens, Tenn., to cousin.
- 50 Undated. Catherine D. Keith, Elmwood, Athens, Tenn., to unknown relative.
Seeking genealogical information.
- 51 18?? November 20. Catherine D. Keith, Elmwood, Athens, Tenn., to W.D. Chunn.
- 52 Poem: "A Meditation" by Lois Taylor Hobson?
- 53 W.N. Chunn Civil War record (handwritten).

- 54 W.N. Chunn family history (handwritten).
- 55 Photograph: Keith home, Athens, Tenn., 1947.
- 56 Brief sketch of Neilson family. Copy of 1849 letter.
- 57 “Recipes for Troubles”. Undated Bible verses.