

University of Memphis

University of Memphis Digital Commons

Special Collections Finding Aids

Special Collections

9-13-2021

MSS0065. R.B. Snowden family papers finding aid

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/speccoll-findingaids>

Recommended Citation

"MSS0065. R.B. Snowden family papers finding aid" (2021). *Special Collections Finding Aids*. 112.
<https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/speccoll-findingaids/112>

This Finding Aid is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections at University of Memphis Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Special Collections Finding Aids by an authorized administrator of University of Memphis Digital Commons. For more information, please contact khggerty@memphis.edu.

**University of Memphis Libraries
Special Collections Department**

126 Ned R. McWherter Library
Memphis, TN 38152 - 3250
Phone: (901) 678 - 2210
E-mail: lib_sc@memphis.edu

R.B. Snowden family papers

Title: R.B. Snowden family papers
Collection No: MSS.65
Extent: 4.6 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1807-1958 (Bulk dates: 1880-1925)

Abstract: The collection contains correspondence, financial and other papers of Robert Bogardus Snowden (1808-1863), his sister Mary Jay Snowden Cairns (1846-1930), and Mary's three children: Bayard, Douglas, and Elizabeth. The bulk of the correspondence is among family members but also includes a small amount of political and business correspondence. The collection documents the private lives of a wealthy family in Memphis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Donor: William W. Deupree, Jr., Memphis, Tennessee, and Nancy Deupree Crisamore, Houston, Texas, June-August 1978.
Processed by: Louisa Bowen and Victoria Moore (CBC intern), 1979; Gerald Chaudron, 2014, 2018.
Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: R.B. Snowden family papers, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.
Publication date: November 2018

Biographical information

On February 26, 1835, John Bayard Snowden (1808-1863), a prominent Nashville businessman married Aspasia Seraphina Imogene Bogardus (1808-1885) in New York City. Aspasia, born August 8, 1808 in Utica, New York, was the youngest daughter of Revolutionary War General Robert Bogardus, while John was the son of the Rev. Samuel Finley Snowden. Their children were Robert Bogardus (1836-1909), Victoria Imogene (1838-1859), Octavia Augusta (1840-1885), John Bayard, Jr. (1842-1850), Eleanora Kirkman (1844-1880), Mary Jay (1846-1930) and Hughetta (1848-1926).

Robert Bogardus Snowden was born on May 24, 1836, in New York City. Shortly after his birth his parents returned to Nashville where John Snowden's business was located. In 1855 upon his graduation from Western Military Institute in Kentucky, Robert moved to New Orleans to pursue a business career. At the age of twenty-one, he returned to Nashville and established R. B. Snowden & Co., a mercantile business, which prospered until the outbreak of the Civil War. Robert entered the Confederate Army as adjutant of the First Tennessee Regiment. He rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel and commanded the 25th Tennessee Regiment at Chickamauga and in Virginia. He surrendered his troops with General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox.

In 1863 John Bayard Snowden died, and Aspasia Snowden returned with her family to her native New York and remained there until her death in 1885. After release from military service, Robert joined his family in New York and resumed his mercantile career. On May 5, 1868, he married Annie Overton Brinkley (1845-1923), daughter of a prominent Memphis businessman. Annie's father, Colonel Robert Campbell Brinkley, gave his daughter The Hotel Peabody as a wedding present. Robert and Annie lived in New York for a year before returning to Tennessee and establishing residence in Memphis. Robert Brinkley bought the Annesdale estate for the couple and it remained in the Snowden family for 160 years. Robert Snowden became one of the wealthiest and most influential men in Tennessee. He gained his wealth from the appropriation of key real estate in the commercial district of downtown Memphis. He was also an investor of consequence in Tennessee coal and iron and had considerable influence in state politics. On October 7, 1909, Robert Snowden died while vacationing in Atlantic City. Robert and Annie had five children: Robert Brinkley (1869-1942), Mary (1871-1938) who married Lawson Henderson Treadwell, Imogene (b. 1874), Annie Brinkley (1878-1924) who married John Thomas Fargason, II (1875-1939), and John Bayard (1881-1968).

Eleanora Kirkman Snowden was born on May 8, 1844. In 1869 she married William Walcott Tracy, an officer in the U.S. Army. They had five children. Mary Jay Snowden was the only child to remain in New York. Born on October 2, 1846, she married Frederick Augustus Cairns (1820-1879), a native New Yorker and son of an East India merchant, in 1874. Cairns held a law degree, a medical degree, and a Ph.D. in chemistry. He was the author of a text on quantitative analysis and a professor of chemistry at Columbia University's School of Mines. After her husband's death, Mary moved back to Memphis, living on Snowden Circle across the street from Annesdale. She died on June 22, 1930.

Hughetta Snowden (1848-1926), the youngest child, entered the Episcopal Sisters of St. Mary in 1871. She was one of the founders of St. Mary's Episcopal School for Girls in Memphis. During the yellow fever epidemic in 1878, she and her order converted their school into a hospital for epidemic victims. Afterwards, she established a school and convent at Sewanee, Tennessee. In the early 1920s she was transferred to the motherhouse of the order in New York, where she died.

Mary and Frederick Cairns had three children. Bayard Snowden Cairns (1875-1934) was educated at Columbia University's School of Architecture and at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts in Paris. In 1904 he moved to Memphis and became a well-known architect. He married Belle Whitfield James Willis (1873-1960) in 1932. Douglas Walker Cairns (1877-1947) was graduated from Columbia University Medical School in 1901. During most of World War I he served on the staff of the post-graduate hospital. Shortly before the close of the war he entered the army and was commissioned as a captain in the medical corps. After the war, he remained in the army and made it his career, retiring as a lieutenant colonel. In 1908 he married Ethel Moore (1880-1960), with whom he had four children. Elizabeth "Bessie" Walker Cairns was born October 23, 1878. She was educated by Episcopal Sisters as a child, and was a Memphis and New York socialite. Late in life she married Charles Preston Twiford (1876-1940) from Norfolk, Virginia, and died on May 10, 1953 in Memphis.

Robert Brinkley Snowden married Sara Eliza Day (1871-1956) in 1892 and their son, Robert Bogardus Snowden, Jr. (1896-1982), was born at Ashlar Hall at 1397 Central Avenue, Memphis. He studied agriculture at Sewanee, Tennessee, and served as a pilot during World War I. He married Grace Whitney Mountcastle (1898-1990) in 1919 and began farming at Horseshoe Plantation in eastern Arkansas. The couple was active in Memphis, including the Wolf River Watershed Association, the Cotton Carnival and other philanthropic activities. Snowden also started a company to manufacture Command-Aire aircraft in Little Rock which built around 350 planes but was forced to close by the Depression. Snowden served with the Army Air Force during World War II with the rank of lieutenant colonel. In 1944, on his return, he supported Thomas Dewey against Franklin Roosevelt in the presidential election, calling his group the Fighting Democrats. In 1948, he chaired the local committee supporting the unsuccessful candidacy of Republican B. Carroll Reece against Democrat Estes Kefauver for the U.S. Senate.

Scope and contents

The collection contains correspondence and financial papers of Robert Bogardus Snowden, his sister Mary Jay Snowden Cairns, and Mary's three children: Bayard, Douglas, and Elizabeth. The bulk of the correspondence is among family members but also includes a small amount of political and business correspondence. The collection documents the private lives of a wealthy family in the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are few references to any major historical events of the time period which the collection spans.

The collection is arranged in four series, primarily by family member and thereunder by type of material. Series 1, the R. B. Snowden papers, contains Snowden's correspondence, 1884-1907, the bulk of which relates to his real estate and stock investments (1895-1896). One folder of correspondence from Tennessee state and local political aspirants contains requests for Snowden's endorsement. This series also includes miscellaneous family correspondence. Of particular interest is a letter of Hughetta "Ettie" Snowden to her sister Octavia, describing life in her religious order, and an 1832 letter to Arthur H. Snowden from his brother-in-law, J. L. Gallagher, who was stationed at Fort Gratiot in the Michigan territory. Four folders of Hughetta Snowden's papers relate to her life with the Sisters of Saint Mary. Seven folders of copies of clippings, mostly collected by Elizabeth Cairns, document the Snowden family and the families they married into from 1881 to 1953.

Series 2, the papers of Mary Snowden Cairns, 1862-1941, contains New York property tax records, 1860-1909, household bills, and personal and business correspondence. The bulk of this series is composed of letters to Mary Cairns from family members in New York and Memphis. These letters concern such topics as Octavia Snowden's illness in 1885, family financial matters, the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, letters from her son Bayard Cairns, and family news.

Series 3, the Cairns children papers, 1881-1950, is arranged by the name of the child: Bayard, Douglas, and Elizabeth. The bulk of this series comprises correspondence to Elizabeth from family members, friends, and admirers. This correspondence reflects the social life of a wealthy family at the turn of the century. Topics discussed concern mostly daily activities, parties, and travels of the writers.

Series 4, Miscellany, includes several scrapbooks, date books, photographs, and a group of playbills from New York theatres. An undated Civil War reminiscence by an unknown author refers to Robert Bogardus Snowden's service during the war.

The 2018 addition includes material from Robert Bogardus Snowden, Jr. regarding his political activities in 1944 and 1948.

Processing information

The collection was part of a group of materials donated by William Deupree, Jr., and Nancy Deupree Crisamore, descendants of the Snowden family, in four installments in 1978. The materials related to the Snowden and Cairns families were separated from those of the Deupree family and form two different collections.

For preservation purposes, the clippings in Series 1 were copied and then disposed of.

Related materials

MSS.463. Deupree family papers.

Subject terms

Cairns, Bayard S., 1875-1934.
Cairns, Douglas W., 1877-1947.
Cairns, Frederick A., 1820-1879.
Cairns, Mary J., 1846-1930.
Playbills--New York (State)--New York.
St. Mary's on the Mountain (Sewanee, Tenn.)
Snowden, Hughetta, 1848-1926.
Snowden, John Bayard, 1808-1863.
Snowden, Robert Bogardus, 1836-1909.
Snowden family.
Twiford, Elizabeth W., 1878-1953.
Twiford, Elizabeth W., 1878-1953--Photographs.
White Motor Company--Photographs.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder

Series 1. Robert Bogardus Snowden.

- 1 Personal correspondence, 1884-1907.
- 2 Political correspondence, 1892.
- 3 Real estate transactions, 1895.
- 4 Financial correspondence, 1895-1896.
- 5 Business correspondence, 1892-1896.
- 6 Miscellaneous correspondence of Annesdale Snowdens, 1885-1915 and undated.
- 7 Miscellaneous correspondence of Samuel Snowdens, 1807-1844.
- 8 Tennessee Military Drill, 1895. Clippings and ephemera.
Clippings, 1881-1953 and undated:
- 9a Colonel Robert B. Snowden. Includes *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 17, No. 11,
1901 November.
- 9b Snowden family, 1. Includes R. Brinkley, J. Bayard and May Snowden.
- 9c Snowden family, 2. Includes Thomas Day, Robert G., Edith and Sara Day
Snowden.
- 10a Cairns family.
- 10b Brinkley, Fargason and Mitchell families.
- 10c Boyle, Falls and Treadwell families.

- 10d Other.
- 11a Huggetta Snowden: Personal correspondence, 1885-1915; obituaries.
- 11b Sister Huggetta's Reminiscences, pp. 352-364, 574-576, undated (copy. Original held by Episcopal Archives, Sewanee, Tennessee); Letter: Sister Kiara, Community of St. Mary, to Dr. Franklin Wright, undated (copy). Donor: Dr. Franklin Wright, Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee, 1990.
- 12 "Women of the Nineteenth Century," and other essays by Huggetta Snowden. Manuscript.
- 13 Miscellaneous printed material, 1898, 1916-1929 and undated. Includes St. Mary 's School, Memphis; St. Mary's on the Mountain newsletters; "The Diocese of Tennessee", Memphis, Vol. 4, No. 11, 1898 March 1.

Series 2. Mary Snowden Cairns.

Correspondence:

- 14 J. B. Snowden - F.A. Cairns, 1875-1915.
- 15 R. B. Snowden, 1888-1904.
- 16 Huggetta Snowden, 1885-1923 and undated.
- 17 Cornelia Cairns, 1879-1893: 1.
- 18 Cornelia Cairns, 1879-1893: 2.

Box 2

- 1 Bayard Cairns, 1893-1923.
- 2 Douglas Cairns, 1901-1916.
- 3 Elizabeth Cairns, 1893-1923: 1.
- 4 Elizabeth Cairns, 1893-1923: 2.
- 5 Elizabeth Cairns, 1893-1923: 3.
- 6 Ethel Cairns, 1924 and undated.
- 7 Other relatives, 1881-1895.
- 8 Other relatives, 1896-1900.
- 9 Other relatives, 1901-1909.
- 10 Other relatives, 1910-1919.
- 11 Other relatives, 1920-1924.
- 12 Other relatives, undated.

Box 3

- 1 Other correspondence, 1877-1887.
- 2 Other correspondence, 1881-1896.
- 3 Other correspondence, 1900-1928.
- 4 Other correspondence, undated.
- 5 Sale and publication of F. A. Cairns' book, 1879-1917.
- 6 Household and medical bills, 1859-1919.
- 7 Tax records: New York property, 1861-1880.
- 8 Tax records: New York property, 1881-1890.
- 9 Tax records: New York property, 1891-1909.
- 10 Arrears and assessment records 1889-1909, 1920.
- 11 Water rates bills: New York, 1862-1907.
- 12 Bank account books: Sixth National Bank of New York: A.S. J. Snowden, 1873;

F.A. Cairns, 1877-1879.

- 13 Miscellaneous invitations, cards, 1883-1941.
- 14 Miscellaneous invitations, cards, 1901-1925.
- 15 Miscellaneous invitations, cards, 1872-1928 and undated.
- 16 Souvenir books, programs, advertisements, 1895-1928 and undated.

Box 4

Series 3. Cairns children.

Bayard Snowden Cairns – Correspondence:

- 1 Elizabeth Cairns, 1915-1923.
- 2 Other relatives, 1881-1915.

Douglas Walker Cairns – Correspondence:

- 3 Mary Cairns, 1909.
- 4a Elizabeth Cairns, 1901-1905.
- 4b Pamphlet: Hawaiian Division, Schofield Barracks, Christmas service, 1923.

Elizabeth Cairns Twiford:

Correspondence:

- 5 Mary Cairns 1900-1921.
- 6 Bayard Cairns, 1893-1932.
- 7 Douglas Cairns, 1910-1928.
- 8 Albert H. Allen 1903-1904.
- 9 Rosser and Elizabeth Malone, 1891-1909.
- 10 George S. Redfield, 1892-1894.
- 11 Appleton H. Staples, 1901-1910.
- 12 Walter G. Plummer, 1900-1903.
- 13 Other relatives, 1885-1906.
- 14 Other relatives, 1932-1950.
- 15 Miscellaneous, 1900-1905.
- 16 Miscellaneous, 1906-1910.

Box 5

- 1 Miscellaneous, 1911-1917.
- 2 Miscellaneous, 1926-1929.
- 3 Miscellaneous, 1927-1947.
- 4 Miscellaneous, undated.
- 5 Miscellany, 1. Includes will, 1940; Bulletin: Academy of Arts, Memphis, 1927.
- 6 Miscellany, 2. Includes appointment book (Elizabeth Twiford?), undated; map of New York state by Bayard S. Cairns, 1887; lock of hair of John T. Fargason III, 1909.
- 7 Greeting cards: Easter.
- 8 Greeting cards: Valentines.
- 9 Greeting cards: Christmas, 1.
- 10 Greeting cards: Christmas, 2.

Series 4. Miscellany.

- 11 Miscellaneous Snowden family correspondence, 1912-1952.

Box 6

- 1 Datebook: 1923, 1924. Belonged to Elizabeth Cairns?.
 - 2 Datebook: 1931, 1933. Belonged to Elizabeth Cairns?.
 - 3 Scrapbook. Inscription states the book was given to Mary Snowden by Maria S. Bogardus, 1855.
 - 4 U.S. Treasury Coupon Bonds, 1898. Belonged to Elizabeth Brinkley.
- Box 7**
- 1 Notebook of finances, 1877-1885; notebook of attendance?, 1870-1873. Belonged to Mary Snowden?.
 - 2 Catalog: Loan Exhibition, National Academy of Design, New York, 1893.
 - 3 Civil War reminiscence, undated. Author unknown.
 - 4 Hudson-Fulton Celebration, New York, 1909: Program and Carnival Pageant souvenir booklet.
- Playbill:
- 5 “Settled Out of Court”, H.C. Miner’s Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York, 1892 August.
 “The Victoria Cross”, Lyceum Theatre, New York, 1884 September.
 “Trilby”, Garden Theatre, New York, 1895, May, June (2).
 “The Masqueraders”, Empire Theatre, New York, 1895 January.
 New Manhattan Athletic Club, New York, 1895 February.
 - 6 “The Harvester”, Lyric Theatre, New York, 1904 October (incomplete).
 “A Society Circus”, New York Hippodrome, 1906 April.
 “A Benefit Performance for the San Francisco Sufferers”, New York Hippodrome, 1906 April (2).
 “Alice Sit-By-The-Fire”, Criterion Theatre, New York, 1906 February.
 - 7 “Katinka”, 44th St. Theatre, New York, 1915.
 “Potash and Perlmutter in Society”, Lyric Theatre, New York, 1916 March.
 “Select Vaudeville and Photo-Plays”, 81st St. Theatre, New York, 1916 February (2).
 “The House of Glass”, Candler Theatre, New York, 1916 February.
 “Margaret Schiller”, New Amsterdam Theatre, New York, 1916 February.
 - 8 “The Unchastened Woman”, 39th St. Theatre, New York, 1916 March.
 “The Cinderella Man”, Hudson Theatre, New York, 1916 February.
 The Strand, New York, 1916 March.
 Metropolitan Opera House, New York, Grand Opera Season 1915-1916.
 “Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary”, Belasco Theatre, New York, 1923 September.
- Advertisement (invitation card): “Peggy” (film), 81st St. Theatre, New York, 1916 February.
- 9 Scrapbook: Clippings collected by George S. Redfield, 1873-1882.
 Photographs:
 - 10 Elizabeth W. Cairns, 1898 and undated.
 - 11 Snowden family, 1906-1907, 1914, 1937, and undated.
 - 12 Miscellany, undated.
 - 13 Buses, undated (circa 1924). White Motor Company buses photographed in Cleveland and Wooster, Ohio, and also with Kentucky Carriers,

- 14 Incorporated, name. Kentucky Carriers, Inc., operated buses in Louisville, Kentucky, as a subsidiary of the Louisville Railway Company from 1923.
White Motor Company staff in front of Cleveland, Ohio, office, circa 1924.
Includes list of company's North American offices and staff.

Box 8

Scrapbook of botanical specimens collected by Elizabeth W. Cairns, circa 1896.
Scrapbook: Marion S. Baird, 1881-1886.

Addition, 2018.

Robert Bogardus Snowden, Jr.:

- OS Scrapbook: Contains clippings regarding the Fighting Democrats, 1944.
Clippings: Advertisements, articles, re: politics, 1944, 1948, 1955, 1958. Includes full page advertisements for Reece senate campaign in 1948, and broadsheet of Arkansas States' Rights Democratic Party of 1948.

Box 7

- 15 Clipping: *Time*, 1945 February 19, pp. 56-58, re: E.H. Crump; Christmas card from Mr. and Mrs. E.H. Crump, 1944; Program: Shelby County Soil Reclamation Day, 1948 October 28; "Declaration of Faith", Clayton Rand, Gulfport, Miss., 1946; 2 booklets from the Eastern Arkansas General Hospital building fund, circa 1947, re: proposed hospital to be built in West Memphis. The fundraising campaign was chaired by Snowden.

Separated materials

The following material has been separated from the collection and disposed of as follows:
Map: Brinkley Subdivision; City of Memphis and Suburbs, Donoho and Bulkley, 1871.
Separated to Special Collections map collection.

'Special Mardi-Gras Supplement, 1898', *The Evening Scimitar*, Memphis, Tenn.
Separated to Special Collections pamphlet collection: MVP 3181 (oversize).