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West Tennessee Historical Society collection finding aid

Title: West Tennessee Historical Society collection
Collection No: MSS.0123
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Abstract: The collection comprises letters, ephemera, photographs, published materials and artifacts on the history of Memphis and West Tennessee collected by the West Tennessee Historical Society.

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Scope and contents

The West Tennessee Historical Society based in Memphis, Tennessee, can trace its roots back to 1857 but adopted its present name in 1935 with Dr. Marshall Wingfield becoming the first president. Its collection of historical materials was transferred to the University of Memphis in 1974.

The collection includes letters, ephemera, photographs, published material and artifacts on the history of Memphis and West Tennessee.

Subject terms

Tennessee—History.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder

Manuscripts

1 Printed poem, "Lines on the Back of a Confederate Note," undated, by Major Samuel Alroy Jonas extolling patriotism of those loyal to the Confederacy during and since the war despite all hardships. Mounted with $100 Confederate note, dated 1 September 1862.

2 Photostatic copy of handwritten letter, 14 October 1833, from Stephen Haynes of Franklin, Tennessee, to his brother Richard Haynes of Union County, Indiana, instructing him to apply for a pension for his Revolutionary War service. Original at the National Archives, Records of the Veterans Administration.

3 Photographic copies of surveyors’ records, deeds, indentures, and bills of sale concerning land and slaves registered in Weakley County, Tennessee, 1784-1832; includes property owned by David Crockett, Andrew Jackson, Alfred Gardner, John Almus Gardner, David Allison, and George Patton.

4 Positive photostatic copy of extra edition of Nashville Union, 15 April 1865, concerning assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

5 Letter, 13 June 1876, of C. D. McLean of Rossville, Fayette County, Tenn., to W. T. Avery concerning the early history of Memphis and Shelby County.

6 Two full sheets of 1878 U. S. Internal Revenue stamps, one engraved with a portrait of Andrew Jackson, the other with that of Zachary Taylor.

7 Four promissory notes for $250.00 each of M. C. Priddy of Memphis, Tenn., to himself, to be paid over an 18-month period following April 1, 1870. Each bears a 15¢ U.S. Internal Revenue stamp.
Positive photostat of petition, 1864, of trustees of Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis asking that their church building, confiscated by General William T. Sherman, be returned to the congregation for religious use; with reply, 4 March 1864, of President Abraham Lincoln, that the U.S. military "must not undertake to run the church" but only occupy church buildings for the duration of wartime emergencies; and order, 18 March 1864, of Major General S. A. Hurlburt (U.S. Army) that the church be returned once the trustees give proof of their loyalty to the Union.

Positive photostat of invitation to attend a Presidential dinner on 14 March 1795, dated 6 March 1795, and addressed to Jno. Shoemaker.

Yellow Fever Memorial Committee, Memphis, appeal for donations, undated (circa 1971).

Copy of typed transcript of will of Dr. Elisha Cullen Dick of Fairfax County, Virginia, dated 4 August 1813, 1825 codicil, and undated certificate of probate. Dr. Dick's role in attending President George Washington on his deathbed is explained by a copy of a 1966 newspaper clipping.

Carbon of a letter, 25 July 1926, from Juan Rayner of Pueblo, Colorado, to his sister concerning General Nathan Bedford Forrest's raid into Memphis during the Civil War.

Clippings and tearsheets on Memphis history from local newspapers, 1898-1964.

Mimeographed list, undated, giving locations of General Nathan Bedford Forrest and his troops in Tennessee, 1862-1865, indicating place, date, and division.

Papers, 1965-1966, concerning a memorial service and unveiling of a highway marker in Crockett County, Tenn., for Thomas Conyers, Sr. (1757-1847), a Revolutionary War veteran who spent the latter part of his life in West Tennessee. The papers include directions to the marker, an invitation to the ceremony, a text of the marker, list of West Tennessee Historical Society members likely to attend, a program, and a clipping reporting on the event. There is also the text of the speech honoring Conyer's descendant, Dr. Sara Conyers Murray, at the dedication service, 15 August 1965, of the Lebanon Methodist Church in Crockett County. In 1844 Conyers allowed the church to begin holding its services in his log cabin home. There is also a copy of Dr. Murray's history of the church, which she wrote in 1965.


Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspaper, 1862, concerning the Civil War.

Papers, 1901 and undated, concerning Judge John P. Young of Memphis; includes two obituaries, his poem, "The Mocking Bird's Song," and a ribbon from the eleventh reunion of the United Confederate Veterans, Memphis, 28-30 May 1901.

Nineteen photographs of pages from the Memphis Press-Scimitar celebrating its sixtieth anniversary, 1940.

Papers on the North Memphis Driving Park, once located in Memphis at Thomas and Maulden Streets; includes original photographs, printed sketches of architectural features of the park, xerox copies and transparencies showing the park on city maps, and display material assembled by Charles Bobbitt (see his article on the park in the West Tennessee Historical Society Papers).

Two songs by Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924), "On the Resurrection Morning" and
"Onward Christian, Soldiers". The collection is comprised of two photographs of manuscript copies prepared by two hands, undated.

22 Typed list of genealogical files held at the Goodwyn Institute, Memphis, undated.

23 Typed copy of memorial held by the Theresa Woman’s Club to Mr. and Mrs. John Gaston of Memphis, read by Mr. J. J. Brenan at their tomb in Forest Hill Cemetery, Memphis, December 1939.

24 Negative photostat of a letter, 30 August 1875, from Nathan Bedford Forrest, Memphis, to Reuben Davis, Aberdeen, Miss.; concerns Forrest’s search for a cannon requested by Davis.

25 Papers, 1863-1954, concerning the Van Dorn-Peters Affair, 1863; includes a letter, 11 May 1863, to President Jefferson Davis concerning the shooting of General Earl Van Dorn (CSA) by Dr. George B. Peters for alleged improprieties with Mrs. Peters (the original is at the Duke University Library). The papers also include a positive photostat and transcripts containing additional information about the affair researched by John R. Peacock.

26 Handwritten summary of the 23 June, 1823, decision by the Tennessee Supreme Court of Errors and Appeals, meeting in Charlotte, Tenn., in the case of James Mallory of Stewart County vs. John Smith.

OS1 1. Printed $1000 bond of the State of Tennessee signed 1 June, 1861, by Governor Isham Harris with nineteen $40 interest coupons signed by Controller F. T. Dunlap; a faint impression of the state seal remains. Interest on the 10-year bond was 8% annually, payable semiannually.

2. Land grant, 18 May, 1786, signed by Patrick Henry, Governor of Virginia, transferring 500 acres of land in Fayette County, Va. (later Kentucky) to Geddes Winston (1734-1794).

27 Letter, 18 April, 1867, from Robert E. Lee, Lexington, Va., as president of Washington College, to Heber W. Jones, Somerville, Tenn., counselling him concerning his preparation for admittance to the school. The letter is framed in wood under glass with its stamped envelope, also in Lee's hand.

28 Letter (copy): Elizabeth Cromwell Armour, Jackson, Tenn., to Richard Cromwell, Jr. (brother), Baltimore, Md., 1826 July 9. Also transcription. (See OS1 for large color copy).


Box 2

unfolded

1. Scrapbook, 1873-1934 and undated, of M. A. Marsh Family of Memphis; contains newspaper clippings of poems, photographs, general news items, and notices of births, deaths, and marriages.

2. Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1952-1955; contains local and
world news of historical interest, and obituaries.
3. Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1948-1953; contains numerous columns by Memphian Paul Flowers, obituaries, and local and world news of historical interest.
4. Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1953-1955; includes obituaries of John D. Rust (the inventor of the mechanical cotton picker) and others; and local news of historical interest.
5. Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1895, 1939-1949; includes photographs of city land marks, society functions, and biographical articles or obituaries on important residents and visitors to Memphis like Jefferson and Varina Davis, Mark Twain, Eugene Magevney, John Gaston, Lee Meriwether, Bessie Vance Brooks, Frederick Cossitt, Andrew Jackson, E. B. Ramsey, Billy Sunday, Gipsy Smith, Jr., Thomas Gailor, and others.

Box 3
Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1951-1955; includes photographs of Southern mansions; biographical articles or obituaries on prominent Southerners like Elizabeth Avery Meriwether, William Orgill, Reuben Webster Millsaps, Amerigo Vespucci, Elizabeth Messick Houk, Ralph Davis, Thomas R. Watkins, an article on Randolph, TN, by Marshall Wingfield; and other local and world news of historical interest.

Box 2
Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1900, 1921-1951; includes articles on the Ku Klux Klan by Mrs. George W. (Mary Hannah) Gordon (widow of the Klan's first Imperial Wizard); biographical articles about Virginia Frazer Boyle, George W. Gordon, and A. R. Porter; articles on the Civil War, the reunion of the N. B. Forrest Camp of the United Sons of Confederate Veterans in Memphis, and on the construction of Richard Halliburton's Chinese junk, the Sea Dragon.

Box 3
1. Scrapbook of clippings from Mid-South newspapers, 1929, 1938; includes articles on pilgrimages and exhibits of homes in Memphis, Natchez, and Holly Springs, Mississippi, the 1887 visit of President and Mrs. Grover Cleveland to Memphis, recollections of the yellow fever epidemics of the 1870's in Memphis, remembrances of the Civil War and its impact on Memphis' development, Memphis social functions, the naming of Beale Street in Memphis, Overton Park Zoo, and obituaries of prominent Memphians.
2. Scrapbook containing manuscript of a poem, 1877, and clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1938-1951; includes articles on Memphis social functions; biographical articles and obituaries on prominent Memphians like Mrs. A. B. Pickell, Marie Greenwood Worden, Irvin S. Cobb, and Thomas Gailor; articles on meetings of Confederate veterans, pilgrimages and exhibits of historic homes in Memphis and La Grange, TN, and in Natchez and Greenville, MS, on the impact of Memphis' private schools, and on the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to novelist William Faulkner.
3. Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1933-1952; includes articles on the changing currents of the lower Mississippi River, the history of Memphis postal service,
Memphis social functions including the annual Cotton Carnival, Memphis street cars, recollections of the Civil War, the banishment of Elizabeth Avery Meriwether from Memphis, the birth of her child Lee, reunions of Confederate veterans, the ceremonies at which William Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, an account by a Memphis woman of her life in Nazi-occupied Norway during World War II, a history of Tupelo, Mississippi, the Lyceum Theatre in Memphis, actress Lillian Russell, and Memphis cemeteries and significant buildings. There are also biographical articles and obituaries on such noted Southerners or visitors as Frederick Cossitt, Thomas Gailor, Anne Sullivan Macy, and Sam Jones.

4. Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1942-1954; includes articles on Memphis postal service, Memphis social functions including the 50th wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Crump, the poems of Virginia Frazer Boyle. historic homes in Memphis and elsewhere in the mid-south, Lee Meriwether's observations on the historic changes in penal methods in Lisbon, Portugal, the likeness of Memphis' E. H. Crump on Time magazine's cover, the poetry of Memphian Walter Malone, Memphis cemeteries, the history of Memphis real estate (featuring the accomplishments of George W. Person, Rowlett Paine, and E. 0. Bailey), settling the estate of Texas multi-millionaire William Lewis Moddy, Jr., tributes to Memphian Dr. Marshall Wingfield, the succession to the throne of England by Queen Elizabeth II, the Tom Lee Memorial in Memphis, and biographical articles or obituaries on Marie Greenwood Worden, Dorothy Dix, Jefferson Davis, and James Zachariah George.

Box 4
Scrapbook of clippings from Memphis newspapers, 1938-1942, with clippings arranged by year in overlapping layers on each page. Topics include the athletics program and the students at Memphis schools-especially at the West Tennessee State Teachers College (later University of Memphis). There is also information on Memphis social and entertainment functions, and Memphians serving the war effort in the armed services and on the home front.

Box 1
Vertical files
34 "Authors of Tennessee", English Department, Whitehaven High School, Memphis, Tenn., 1965.
38 Copy of typescript history of early Shelby County, Tennessee, churches, author unidentified, undated.
40 Chelsea Avenue Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Centennial 1856-1956.
41 First Presbyterian Church, Somerville, Tenn., tour information, 1974.
43 “50 Years in the Life of a Community”, Bemis, Tenn., circa 1950.
47 “Commerce Title Record”, historical articles by Paul R. Coppock, circa 1969.
50 Pamphlet: “Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, has the only statue of Colonel David Crockett”, Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, 1955.
55 *150 Years in Fayette County*, Fayette County Sesquicentennial, Inc., 1974.
56 “John Gaston, Citizen”, City of Memphis, 1941.

**Box 5**

Unusual Tennessee Place Names, no author, undated.


Republican State Executive Committee of Tennessee, Shelby County, reports, 1963: Motion to recognize Millsaps Fitzhugh as Chairman; Answer of the Chairman and Steering Committee of the Shelby County Republican Executive Committee to a Document filed by Millsaps Fitzhugh; Appendices to the Answer of the Chairman and Steering Committee of the Shelby County Republican Executive Committee.


Shelby County Sheriff’s Department Progressive Expansion Program, 1959. Two organizational charts.

Early History of the Southeastern States: A Series of Brief Historical Accounts of the Nine States Served by the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company, Atlanta, 1959.


Tennessee Historical Markers Erected by the Tennessee Historical Commission, 1958.


“DeSoto Park: Its Romance and History”, City of Memphis, 1941.


26 Reynolds, George, Sewanee and the Cumberland Plateau in the Civil War, University of the South, undated.
29 Program: Old Market Street School historic marker dedication, 1979 November 12.
30 La Grange, Tennessee, churches: One-page history of LaGrange United Methodist Church, undated; Pamphlet: History of Immanuel Episcopal Church, undated.
31 Program: Community Conservation: Developing Cultural Consciousness, Memphis Academy of Arts, 1979 April 6-7.
32 Program: Memphis Cotton Carnival, 1967 May 6-14: Book and booklet.
40 Southern Jewish Heritage, Memphis, Tenn., 26:2, 2016 Spring. Articles on Hillel Society, University of Memphis; Rosenwald Schools.
42 Blank notebook: Wm. Len Hotel, Main and Monroe, Memphis, undated (circa 1930). “Memphis’ Newest Hotel”.

5. Documents: Blank indenture form; plat and description of land in Tipton’s District north side of the Big Hatchie River, undated; plat and description of land on south side of Big Hatchie River, including land belonging to John Rice. Plat by Granville A. Pillow for Gideon Pillow, Sr., undated; plat fragments, including land of John Johnson, J.H. Eaton,
J. Alcorn, undated; promissory note: Maury Circuit Court to pay two dollars to Joseph Kilpatrick, witness in case of David Ross vs William Brown, 1810 term.


7. Proclamation: City of Memphis’ 199th Anniversary, Memphis and Shelby County Mayors, 2018 May 22.


Images
43 Tintype of group of men, a woman, and a child standing on porch of unidentified store, undated.

44 Cabinet card: Jefferson Davis, copy photograph of 1875 image by G. Moses, 121 Canal Street, New Orleans, La.


46 Mounted photograph: Mary Jane Smyth, undated (damaged).

   2. Colonel Richard P. Lake leading march on Main Street, Memphis, undated.

Box 6
1 Carte de visite: Unidentified man, undated: postcard: Dr. B. V. Hudson Home, Bolivar, Tenn., circa 1950; postcard: "The Briers", Natchez, Miss., early 1900s.


3 Color lithograph of four flags of Confederacy and Confederate organizations, undated. Verso reads: "Sold for benefit of Davis monument. Mrs. W. M. Robert Vawter, compiler, Richmond chapter."


OS1 1. Printed ink sketches by Lynnon Killingsworth, 1979-1980, including: Memphis skyline, Fontaine House, Memphis Queen II and Hernando De Soto Bridge, Memphis International Airport, Four Bridges.
3. Bird's eye view of City of Memphis, Tenn. (copy), 1870.

Maps

OS1 Lawrence, William, Map of Memphis (copy), 1819.
OS2 U. S. War Department. Office of the Chief of Engineers. "Military Maps illustrating the Operations of the Armies of the Potomac and James, May 4, 1864 to April 9, 1865 including Battlefields of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Northanna, Totopotomoy, Cold Harbor, the Siege of Petersburg and Richmond, Battlefields of Five Forks, Jetersville and Sailor's Creek, Highbidge, Farmville and Appomattox Court House," Washington, DC: U. S. War Department, 1869.


OS5 Map of Gettysburg and Antietam in 1863. General map on linen and 12 topographical maps. Army Service School, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, 1913.

Audiovisual

AV1 Audio:
Tennessee.

Video:
4. VHS: Berke, David, “Road Trip”, undated.
5. VHS: Rufus and Carla Thomas, Center for Southern Folklore Festival, undated.

Periodicals

Box 7
4. Harper's Weekly, vol. 4, no. 177 (19 May 1860) Cover tearsheet; 22 June 1861; illus. tearsheet; 31 Aug 1861, illus. tearsheet; April 1862, illus. tearsheet; 5 July 1862, vol. 6, no. 288, cover tearsheet; 11 Oct 1862, illus. tearsheet; 26 Dec 1863, two illus. tearsheets; 10 Sept 1864, illus. tearsheet; 5 May 1866, illus. tearsheet; 16 Feb 1867, illus. tearsheet; vol. 12, no. 593 (9 May 1868); vol. 14, no. 729 (17 Dec 1870); vol. 48, no. 2482 (16 July 1904). New York, NY: Harper and Brothers.

Box 8
The Weekly Toiler: Official Organ of the Agricultural Wheel and Farmers’ Alliance of Tennessee, Nashville, Tenn., Vol. 3:4, June 20, 1888-Vol. 4:34, January 22, 1890.

Box 9
The Weekly Toiler: Official Organ of the Agricultural Wheel and Farmers’ Alliance of Tennessee, Nashville, Tenn., Vol. 4:34, January 22, 1890-Vol. 7: 29, December 28, 1892.
Box 10


Box 11


Sheet music

Box 12

23. "Rock Me to Sleep, Mother," music by Ernest Leslie, lyrics by Florence Percy. G. D.

Artifacts

Box 13
unfolded
3. United Confederate Veterans reunion ribbons: Charleston, S.C. reunion, 10-13 May 1899 (2); Hiram S. Bradford Bivouac, Brownsville, Tenn., undated (2).

Box 14
2. Banner: Washington and Lee University, undated, felt.

Box 15
1. Framed item: 1862 Great Seal of the Confederacy (facsimile), undated; with silver and copper Memphis Sesquicentennial medallions, 1969.
3. Forks (2): Rev. Gustavus A. Klein and Mrs. Madeline May Miner Klein received the silver forks, engraved “Woodlawn”, as a wedding present from their neighbors in La Grange, Tenn., where Klein was pastor of the Methodist Church at the end of the nineteenth century.

Unboxed
1. Hand-forged iron corner brace, Second Presbyterian Church, Main and Beale Streets. Removed during razing of the building.
3. Sword: Purportedly belonged to Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith (1824-1893). It is suggested that Smith gave the sword to Charles Todd Quintard (1824-1898), 2nd Episcopalian Bishop of Tennessee and first Vice-Chancellor of the University of the South. Quintard then passed it on to Rev. Dr. Arthur Howard Noll (1855-1930), Quintard and Smith’s biographer, who served as Registrar at the University of the South in the early twentieth century.
4. Peg leg of unfinished wood.
5. Seal of Tennessee, 1970s.