

**BENTLEY, BLANCHE SPURLOCK
PAPERS,
1761-1942**

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Introduction

The Bentley Papers were obtained from Grace Brown, the executor of the estate of Sterling Brown of Woodbury, Tennessee. Sterling Brown had possession of the papers as executor of the estates of Frank and Eldridge Bentley, sons of Blanche Spurlock Bentley. Photocopies of other Bentley papers owned by Mrs. Joe Elkins, McMinnville have been added to the collection. The linear feet of shelf space is .42 and the approximate number of items is 300.

Literary rights for the unpublished writings of Blanche Spurlock Bentley in these papers have been dedicated to the public. Single photocopies may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Bentley Papers, 1761-1942, are composed of correspondence, genealogical data, indentures, maps, a muster roll, historical notes, and sketches on McMinnville and Warren County. Sixteen of these letters were written by a Federal soldier with the 19th Regiment, Michigan Volunteers, who signed his name "Cy" and from the content of one of the letters it is judged that his surname was Titus. The letters were written to Nannie (Mrs. Butler), a widow with two children, whose home was McMinnville. Cy served with Sherman's army and gave some vivid descriptions of the destruction wrought in Georgia and South Carolina in late 1864 and early 1865. Approximately 37 letters between the dates 1897-1942 deal with genealogy. Six folders contain genealogical material on the following families: Archer, Argo, Armstrong, Bentley, Black, Bolling, Bonner, Bostock, Branch, Buchanan, Coffee, Cunningham, Edmondson, Eldridge, Farrar, Fisher, Garretson, Gay, Goode, Gwyn, Harding, Heath, Henderson, Higgenbotham, Hoge, Laughlin, Lee, Loyd, Looney, McGee, Mitchell, Powell, Poythress, Rodgers, Rolfe, Rowan, Rust, Smartt, Sniper, Soane, Spurlock, Trent, Vaughn, Wilcher, Williams, Wilson, Woodson, Worsham, and others. Also included is a list of Virginia counties and parishes, the wills of Thomas and Samuel Bentley, Matthew Branch, Alexander Trent, and John Weldon, and a list of McMinnville residents from the early 1900s.

Mrs. Bentley authored a number of articles, including the well known pamphlet published by the Lookout Publishing Company entitled "Beersheba Springs and the Chickamauga Trace." She collected material and wrote a number of sketches on various subjects dealing with McMinnville and Warren county. In several of the sketches about McMinnville the names of three early settlers are prominent: Henry Beidleman, Pleasant Henderson, and James Lyon. Other sketches deal with early roads including the Kentucky Road, Walton Road, Stones River Road, and others. The manuscripts of many of her sketches are among these papers. The remainder of the papers constitute some land notes and indentures, a muster roll of Captain A. Northcut's Company, dated 1846 (Mexican War), and some personal memorabilia.

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

1. Correspondence, 1843 -1865.
2. Correspondence, 1897- 1942.
3. Genealogical Data- Archer, Argo, Armstrong, Bentley, Black Bolling, Bonner, Bostick, Bostock, Branch, Buchanan
4. Genealogical Data- Colville, Coffee, Cunningham, Edmondson, Eldridge, Farrar, Fisher, Garretson, Gay, Goade, Goode, Gwyn, Harding, Heath, Henderson, Higgenbotham, Hill, Hoge.
5. Genealogical Data- Laughlin, Lee, Lloyd, Looney, McGee, Mitchell, Morford, Powell, Poythress, Read, Rodgers, Rolfe, Rowan, Rust, Smartt, Sniper, Soane, Spurlock.
6. Genealogical Data- Trent, Vaughan, Wilcher, Williams, Wilson, Woodson, Worsham, Kennon.
7. Virginia Counties and Parishes. Wills of Bentley, Branch, Trent, and Weldon Harrison.
8. Genealogical Data-Including list of McMinnville residents in the early 1900's.
9. Warren County-Historical Sketches.
10. Warren County-Historical notes, sketches, etc.
11. Warren County-Historical notes, sketches, etc.
12. Warren County-Historical notes, sketches, etc.
13. Warren County-Historical notes, -Henry Beidleman, Pleasant Henderson and James Lyon.
14. Warren County-Historical notes,-McMinnville.
15. Warren County-Historical notes,-Roads-Kentucky, Walton, et al.
16. Warren County-Historical notes,-Land: Notes, Maps, and Indentures, 1761-1930.
17. Muster Roll-Captain A. Northcut's Company, 1846.
18. Memorabilia.

FOLDER 1, BOX 1

Correspondence 1843 - 1865

1. Michael Eshbach, Mountville, Lancaster County,, Pennsylvania to Mrs. Catharine Lehman, Markham Post Office, Canado West, via Toronto Feb. 8, 1843.
2. Bell, Newport to my dear Friend Nov. 27 (no year).
3. William S. Thompson, Oak Hill Seminary to "Dear Father", Jan. 17, 1861. "We heard here that there was a prospect of a settlement of our political difficulties, have you any hopes of a final adjustment? I have not, I think too bitter a feeling of hostility has taken hold of the minds North and South, bitter indeed is the thought, that the best government on the Globe should be broken up the most perfect Constitution ever formed by man, should be trampled under foot, and that this, the happiest country in the world should flow with brothers' blood, shed by brother's hands, that our swarming cities and quiet villages should be given to fire and sword yet I think the present difficulties, if not speedily settled, portend such things, but I leave politics for older and wiser heads than mine."
4. John F Spurlock, husband, Nashville to Dear Lou, April 29, 1869. Wrote of Federal spies entrapping people and said, "I do hope and trust my friends will be prudent, if they are not inevitable ruin awaits them."

15 Letters to, Mrs. Butler (formerly Miss Slater) from Cy, a, Federal Soldier and her Brother Bernard Slater.

1. May 30, 1864, Cy to "my dear Nannie." This is the first of a series of letters from Cy to Nannie. He gives as his address "near New Hope Church, In line of Battle." The fighting is near Atlanta. He writes of night fighting and that they were constantly having skirmishes with the "rebs." "When will this terrible war come to an end."
2. Cy to Nannie, Aug. 28, 1864, Address of Cy is "Camp on the Chattahoochee River, miles from Atlanta, Ga." Gives accounts of the fighting near Atlanta. His company has been sent to cut the Macon Railroad in order to cut off the Rebels supply trains. Tells Nannie he dreamed they were married and had a lovely little cottage. He also notes that his term of enlistment expires in 1 year and 7 days.
3. Cy in Atlanta, Sept. 6, 1864. "My dearest Nannie." He does not speak very highly of Southern women. The women who "hung around" the army camps were not of a very high type. Tells of cutting the rebels off from the South and the capture of Atlanta. He speaks of Nannie being in McMinnville.

4. Sept. 1864, Cy belonged to the 19th Regiment Mich. Vol. Cy, Atlanta, Georgia, to Nannie.
5. Barnard, Sulphur Springs, Jefferson Co., Missouri to his “dear Sister” who seems to be the Nannie of the other letters, Sept. 25, 1864. He begs Nannie to come live with him. He tells her Michigan is an “out of the way” state.
6. Barnard Slater, Sulphur Springs, Jefferson County, Missouri to Cy. “Dear Sir, Having become acquainted with you or rather your existence through my Sister Mrs. Butler [Nannie] of McMinnville, Tenn.”
7. Cy, Atlanta Georgia, Nov. 7, 1864 to “my dearest Nannie Mrs. Butler.” In this letter he wrote it was a pitiable sight to behold little children almost naked and many women barefooted “loading on to go North.” “I could not help but feel sorry from the very bottom of my heart to see what destitution this cruel war has brought upon these people. But enough of this perhaps long before you receive this Atlanta will be among those places that were as it is the intentions (I should judge from all appearances) to destroy the place as all the machinery we had here is being removed as fast as possible to Chattanooga and the main buildings have been dug under and powder put under them all citizens are ordered to leave all our artillery has been sent away at different points north of Chattanooga and at that place it is the opinion of many that we are going on a raid to Savannah Ga.”
8. Cy, near Savannah, Ga., Dec. 17, 1864 to “my dearest Nannie,” (Mrs. Butler) he wrote that they would have already captured Savannah if the country had not been so marshy. They could not move their artillery. He said they had captured a Steam boat on the “Savannah river loaded with whiskey and some other articles we have captured an immense quantity of rice we have opened communications with our fleet took one fort with 27 guns and 3 hundred prisoners. It is a fort that our gun boats tried to take but could not our men took it in fifteen minutes.”
9. Cy, Hardus Plantation, S. C., Jan. 13, 1865 to “my very dear Nannie.” In this letter he tells her that he wishes very much that she would go to his father's home in Michigan so that she would not be so badly mistreated. He also ends his letter by sending “his love” to Nannies’s children.
10. Cy, Fayetteville, N. C. March 12, 1865 to “my dearest Nannie.” These letters follow Sherman's route. He wrote that they were getting short of food especially bread since the had started out with 15 days rations and they had been gone 40 days. “Still we have had plenty to eat as we forayed upon the country through which we passed besides destroying an immense quantity of property the country through which we came has been or was before we passed through very wealthy it is now nothing but a

barren cities towns and buildings of all kinds were destroyed. I mean in South Carolina it seemed that each corps tried to excel each other in burning and laying waste the Capitol of S. C. was burned to ashes and many more cities railroads destroyed for miles and beyond all repairs by the rebels as they have no iron to replace those destroyed besides thousands of bales of cotton. This campaign has been a terrible blow to the people of S. C. as well as to the Confederate army, railroads over which they recd their supplies has been destroyed causing them to evacuate places that were almost impregnable that was the cause of Wilmington and Charleston being evacuated or rather one of the main causes. But since we came into North Carolina there has not been so great a destruction of property.”

11. Cy, In the field, N. C. March 14, 1865 to “my dearest Nannie, Our men have stript the country entire tis nothing but a barren. Railroads destroyed cities, Towns, and nearly all the dwellings together with out buildings were burned through the State of S. C. the track of Sherman's Army will be felt not only by the citizens (for which it was not all intended) but by the whole Southern Conthieveracy. This campaign was the prime cause of Wilmington and Charleston being evacuated and the very thing for which it was intended. As Sherman now states that the object of the campaign is now accomplished and we shall strike for some point of communication as soon as possible and probably will stop for a short time to recruit up the men and fit out for an other Tis stated and that reliable too that Richmond is evacuated and that Lee is marching to give us battle and that Grant is following him closely and we may expect in a few days to hear the thundering of artillery and the rattle of musketry should this be so I predict the end of the so called Confederacy nigh even unto their doors.”
12. Cy, near Goldsboro, N. C. April 2, 1865 to “my very dear Nannie, Every day brings more and more encouraging news about a speedy restoration of peace it is now positively stated that Ex President Stephens of the S. C. says that lasting peace between the North and South (in which the South will come back to the Union) and that too before May 1st 65, and also that these are Gen. Lee’s sentiments and Lee further states that no man with 3 hundred thousand more troops (of which they have not got) added to their number could not now save the Confederacy they have no hope in the interference of foreign powers neither have they any hopes in themselves (the bright delusive fancy which they entertained of a Southern Republic or Southern independence has vanished and with it all their most sanguine hopes).”
13. Cy, near Goldsboro, N. C. April 5, 65 to “my very dear Nannie.” This letter tells her that they were moving soon. They must have been stationed a long time in or near McMinnville. He said he heard “many of the Boys speak of McM, and of their intention to visit it as soon as their time is out.”

14. This letter from Cy to Nannie is not dated. He does not say where they are located exactly but they had already been through S. C. so it would seem to be N. C. He said four railroads pass through the place and the river is navigable to that point. "the people (which by the way are mostly all women and children) claim to be Union and I doubt not that many are sincere but in South Carolina they were mostly all seceash . I never saw so many widows in my life go to a house ask the Lady where her husband was the reply is nine out of tan would be he was dead had either been killed or died before the war broke out." He wrote that the campaign had been long and tedious "the rebels had burned all the bridges yet this did not hinder us much as we had pontoons with us and could put a bridge down in a very short time. We have traveled according to Sherman's report over five hundred miles through the enemies country destroying an immense quantity of property which must be a terrible blow towards putting down this cursed rebellion we have lived pretty well most of the time or at least until we had the fight. Since which time we have been pretty destitute we have not anything now but expect plenty this evening our wagons are all after rations and will be in some time today. We have lost a good many men here lately by going out foraging they went a little to far and were either killed or captured. The rebels have killed a good many that they had captured foraging we found five in one pile one day with label fastened to it on which was written death to all foragers it was talked that we would retaliate for all killed in that way but whether it is or was so I cannot tell." He said he was nearly captured while out foraging.

14. Charles B. Slater, Blancheester, Ohio, June 6, 1865 to "my Dear Sister." This seems to be the same brother of Nannies who wrote her and signed his name "Barnard." He said he had a letter from Mr. Titus and that he was in Washington City when he wrote May 28th but expected to start home in a few days since they were making out their mustering out rolls. This Mr. Titus may be Cy. Later in the letter he wrote, "Cy talked of coming to see me in his last letter." "This" seems to refer to the Mr. Titus mentioned earlier.