



**State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives**

Demonbreun Family Ledger, 1860-1902

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:

Demonbreun, David Henry, 1850-1913
Demonbreun, James Edward, 1829-1868

Inclusive Dates:

1860-1902

Scope & Content:

Slim unpaginated volume is part account book, recipe book, and Demonbreun family record. Most of the accounts were created by Cheatham County farmers James Edward Demonbreun and his son, David Henry Demonbreun . The name is consistently spelled “Demumbra” throughout the ledger. The entries are not chronological; they begin and end in 1881, with notes for the 1860s and 1870s in between. There is a single notation of a 1902 death. Several book leaves are torn, and a child’s pencil scribbling mars some of the pages.

The dated accounts list individual debtors, the goods and services they bought, and their credits. They identify consumables such potatoes, corn, wheat, sorghum, sweet potatoes, onions, and “beaf” [beef]. Accountings are made for wool, cotton, building supplies, leather, rails, nails, clapboards, tobacco, and whiskey. Animal feed staples like oats and hay are often mentioned. Hauling, wagon driving, and horseshoeing are among the services performed or purchased. Jhony [Johny Demumbra?] paid for half-soles and a “monkey ranch” in July 1884. Of some interest may be the acquisitions made on February 15, 1868. James E. Demumbra and R. S. B. bought a loom for fifteen dollars, a grindstone for five dollars, and a pair of “candle moulds” for fifty cents each.

Labor costs vary through the decades. In 1860 a day’s hire cost between 65 cents and one dollar. In 1872 James Boyd and William Glover were each paid \$1.50 per day. The name “Black Lige” appears several times between 1866 and 1870. It could be that Lige was a freedman since he was paid less for labor. In 1870 he

earned only \$4.50 for eight days' work. Milly, perhaps also African American, earned seventy-five cents for 5 ½ days' work the same year.

Tucked in between accounts are recipes for the treatment of flux (diarrhea), jaundice, and rheumatism. The cure for flux (1882) included manna and warm milk. Jaundice (1861) could be treated by a mixture of honey, butter, and apple vinegar. Directions for pickling beef can be found in an 1867 recipe. The remedy for "rumatism" (1860) consisted of poke root, red pepper, and peach tree sprout.

Scattered throughout are records listing 19th century Demonbreun family members, making it a genealogical gem. Most records include birthdates, and some include death dates. Lists of Binkley and Keeler (Heeler?) family names were probably entered by Mary Armstrong Binkley and Mary Stuart/Stewart Demonbreun.

Surnames associated with accounts include Bell, Biggs, Boyd, Burgess, Burton, Carney, Casy (Casey?), Cradic (Craddock?), Edwards, Farmer, Freeman, Glover, Hampton, Hudson, Maris, Nichols, Porter, Simpkins, Tomlin, and Winters.

The ledger is historically significant because it enhances understanding of a Reconstruction era farming operation in Middle Tennessee. It provides valuable information about late 19th century agriculture prices and labor costs, contemporary diet, period accounting practices, folk recipes, and Demonbreun family history. In general, the ledger affords a glimpse into the lives of a prominent Cheatham County farming family.

Physical Description/Extent:

1 reel microfilm; 16mm

Accession/Record Group Number:

Mf. 2044

Language:

English

Permanent Location:

Mf. 2044 (available only on microfilm)

Repository:

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243-0312

Administrative/Biographical History

Census and family records show that the modern Demonbreun family name was spelled a number of ways throughout its history, among them: Demumbra, De Montbrun, De Mont-Breun, Demenabram, Demunbrun, Demumbrine, and De Monbrun. Family tradition traces Demonbreun roots to 15th century France, with the birth of Jehan Boucher II (1475-1533). The genealogical website ancestry.com includes another generation in the family line, that of Jehan's father, Jehan Boucher I (1440-1540) from the Aquitaine region of France.

The direct line from ledger-keeper James Edward Demonbreun to Jehan Boucher I is listed here in ascending order:

James Edward Demonbreun (1829-1868), son of
John Baptiste Demonbreun (1788-1872), son of
Jacques Timothé Boucher De Montbrun (1746-1826), son of
Jean Etienne Boucher De Montbrun (1714-1826), son of
Jean Boucher De Montbrun (1666-ca. 1742), son of
Pierre Boucher (1622-1717), son of
Gaspard Boucher (ca. 1595-1663), son of
Jacques Boucher (1562-1611), son of
Jean Boucher (1521-ca. 1611), son of
Jehan Boucher (1495-?), son of
Jehan Boucher (1475-1533), son of

Fleeing war, famine, and epidemics, Gaspard Boucher (ca.1595-1662) was the first of the line to emigrate from France to the New World, traveling in 1634 or 1635 to Quebec. Quebec at that time was little more than a fur trading post, and those early settlers formed the core of what are today called French Canadians.

Among the five children Gaspard Boucher brought with him to New France was Pierre. According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Pierre Boucher led a distinguished life as a soldier, interpreter of Indian languages, and government servant. He was the first Canadian colonist to be ennobled by King Louis XIV (1661).

Pierre's son Jean Boucher De Montbrun also joined the army and fought in the pivotal Battle of the Plains of Abraham (1759) during the Seven Years' War (known in America as the French and Indian War.) The battle resulted in the British capture of Quebec and the transfer of most Canadian territory to England. Canadian provinces gradually won their independence, but the British monarch is still the country's official, albeit titular, head of state. It is a member of the [British] Commonwealth of Nations. Jean Boucher had thirteen children.

Jean's son Jean Etienne Boucher De Montbrun was the father of the most legendary family member, Jacques Timothé De Montbrun (anglicized as Timothy Demonbreun), born in Quebec, New France, in 1746 or 1747. Timothy, often described as high-spirited, may have been among the first settlers in the Cumberland, and it is believed he was the first white man to live in what was later called Nashville. Legend has it that he lived in a cave near the sulfur spring. He was a hunter, fur trader, soldier of the American Revolution, lieutenant general of the Illinois Territory (1783-1786), and entrepreneur. Though Timothy was rugged, he was also a mannered diplomat who moved easily between high society and the frontier.

During the 1780s, Timothy managed to keep two families while he traveled back and forth between Illinois and new settlement at Nashville. His legal wife, Therese Archange Gibault, lived with their five children in Kaskaskia, Illinois Territory. Undocumented family stories say she moved briefly to Nashville in 1790, but left abruptly after Indians kidnapped and killed her infant daughter. Timothy also had a local common law wife, Elizabeth Hensley Bennett, with whom he had four children. Elizabeth is said to have molded bullets during the harrowing raid on Buchanan's Station (1792). She later married Timothy's friend, Joseph Durard. Family lore has it that they ran a stagecoach inn called "Granny Rat's Tavern" in the White's Creek area of Davidson County.

Timothy thrived in Nashville where he operated a tavern and a mercantile business that advertised, among other items, window glass and buffalo tongues. For his Revolutionary War service, Timothy received two 1,000-acre land grants in Tennessee, much of it in what became Cheatham County, and he prospered because of his entrepreneurial spirit. Kentucky granted him more than 2,600 acres for his service to that state.

A fairly cultured man, the "First Citizen of Nashville" entertained the Duke of Orleans (the future "Citizen King" of France, Louis-Philippe) during the Southern leg of his American tour in 1797. In 1825, while the Marquis de Lafayette visited Nashville on his own American tour, the two men spoke together in their native French. Timothy died the next year. The location of his burial site is a mystery.

In his Davidson County will, Timothy specifically mentioned three of his Nashville children as illegitimate. One of them was Jean (John) Baptiste, born in 1788 or 1789. After John Baptiste had been widowed twice, he married Elizabeth Betsy Hollis in 1823 in Davidson County. A veteran of the War of 1812, it was John Baptiste Demonbreun who settled his growing family in the Big Marrowbone community of what became Cheatham County, Tennessee. He died there in 1826. (Cheatham was formed from Davidson County in 1856.)

Among John Baptiste's and Betsy's several children was James Edward, who began keeping the Cheatham County account ledger in 1860. Little is known

about James. His son, David Henry, continued keeping the farm accounts after his father's death "at half after 3 o'clock in the morning" on August 21, 1868.

David Henry's name appears several times in federal and county records. Cheatham County court records show that "D. H. Demumbra" married Rebecca J. Nichols on December 27, 1872. At the time of the 1880 federal census, David and Rebecca were living in Civil District 1 of Cheatham County. Most of the 1890 census was destroyed by fire, so the next time David appears in a census is 1900. There, his wife is listed as Marin, but the 1910 census identifies her as Mary. David Henry Demonbreun died in 1913.

According to Demonbreun descendant Connie S. Simpkins Thomas, David taught school and was a strict disciplinarian. She remembers relatives talking about how he and his family hid their valuables in area caves during the Civil War. (The family's political leanings are unknown, but most Cheatham County residents were Confederate sympathizers.) Their house near Big Marrowbone Creek still stands.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

Irregular within volume

Conditions of Access and Use

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Index Terms

Personal/Family Names:

Demonbreun, David Henry, 1850-1913

Demonbreun, James Edward, 1829-1868

Subjects:

Agriculture -- Accounting
Agricultural laborers -- Tennessee
Country life -- Tennessee
Farm life -- Tennessee
Land use, Rural -- Tennessee
Medicine -- Formulae, receipts, prescriptions
Medicine, Popular -- Formulae, receipts, prescriptions
Medicine, Rural -- Tennessee
Medicine -- Tennessee
Medicine -- History -- United States -- 19th century -- Sources
Rural conditions -- Tennessee
Rural landowners
Traditional medicine -- Formulae, receipts, prescriptions

Geographic Names:

Cheatham County (Tenn.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources
Davidson County (Tenn.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources

Document Types:

Account books

Acquisition and Appraisal**Provenance and Acquisition:**

Ledger was loaned for microfilming by Demonbreun descendant Connie S. Thomas, in April 2014.

Processing and Administrative Information**Preferred Citation:**

Demonbreun Family Ledger, 1860-1902, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Processing Information:

Prepared for microfilming by Susan L. Gordon, June 2014.

Existence and Location of Originals:

Privately held.

Electronic Location and Access:

<http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/mf2044.pdf>

DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Volume
Ledger	1860-1902	1