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DONSELSON, BETTIE MIZELL
(1862-1939)
PAPERS
1787-1938
(THS COLLECTION)

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INTRODUCTION

This collection centers around Bettie (Mizell) Donelson (1862-1939) and her work in preserving "The Hermitage," restoring the Hermitage Presbyterian Church (1889), collecting Jackson memorabilia, and acting as secretary and later Regent in the Ladies Hermitage Association. The Bettie M. Donelson Papers were given to the Tennessee Historical Society in 1940 by Mrs. Bettie Donelson Heins, granddaughter of the owner.

The materials in this finding aid measure 2.94 linear feet. There are no restrictions on the materials.

Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Bettie Mizell Donelson Papers may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Bettie Mizell Donelson Papers, containing approximately 530 items and 17 volumes, cover the years 1787-1938. The collection is composed of correspondence; legal papers (land grants, articles of agreement, powers of attorney, court cases, and indentures); newspaper clippings on "The Hermitage," Rachel and Andrew Jackson, the Ladies Hermitage Association, Tennessee Centennial Exposition (Woman's Board), Woman's Suffrage and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union; photographs of Rachel and Andrew Jackson, "The Hermitage," various members of the Ladies Hermitage Association, and Bettie M. Donelson; several volumes of scrapbooks (one on Andrew and Rachel Jackson, two on the assassination of William Alexander Donelson (1850-1900), six volumes on the Ladies Hermitage Association, and one volume on the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Woman's Suffrage); plus other miscellaneous items.

The earliest letters in this collection date from 1818 and are family letters between members of the Donelson family. Such topics as family news, debts, and politics were discussed. Most of the other correspondents, dating from the late 1800s through the early 1900s, wrote to Bettie Mizell Donelson concerning such topics as the business of the Ladies Hermitage Association, the refurbishing of "The Hermitage" with the original furniture, concerts and other activities to raise money for carrying on the work of the Association and the work of the Woman's Board for the Tennessee Centennial.

The legal papers involve the Donelsons during the late 1700s through the early 1800s. These include land grants from North Carolina in the names of John and Stokely Donelson; court records of James G. Martin, Richard G. Waterhouse, et al and Stokely Donelson, et al; and indentures in the names of various individuals, mostly from Rhea County, Tennessee, including a marriage contract (1799) between Elizabeth (Glasgow) Martin and Stokely Donelson executed in Knox County, Tennessee. There was also a court judgment filed in 1901 between Sam Pride and William Giles Baker, et al in these legal papers.

The scrapbooks, especially those of the Ladies Hermitage Association, make up the rest of the collection. The Association scrapbooks give the early history of the Ladies Hermitage Association; the programs for the different activities undertaken, such as the Jackson Day celebrations, visits by prominent people; as well as the yearly activities, including election of officers for two-year terms, beautification programs at "The Hermitage," the buying of Jackson memorabilia, and outings for the ladies. Most of this material is made up of newspaper clippings. (Often, Mrs. Donelson would write notations along the sides of the pages.) The scrapbook concerning Rachel and Andrew Jackson is also made up of newspaper clippings. In particular, these clippings criticize the article written on Rachel Jackson by Meade Minnigerode for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Two other scrapbooks concern the assassination of William Alexander Donelson (1850-1900), husband of Bettie M. Donelson, by William Giles Baker. One, written by Bettie M. Donelson, is entitled "Bettie M. Donelson. Memorandum. Bearing on Baker's two

unsuccessful attempts to murder Mr. Donelson on March 23, 1900; also on the foul assassination on July 21, 1900.” The other one concerns the trial of Baker as it was reported in the newspapers. The last scrapbook is made up of newspaper clippings on Woman’s Suffrage and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. Many of these clippings concern the national meeting of the W.C.T.U. held in Nashville, Tennessee, during November 1907.

Other items such as music sheets, photographs, architectural drawings, etc., can also be found in the collection.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Bettie Mizell Donelson

- 1862 Born on Dickerson Road in Nashville, Tennessee. Daughter of George and Georgia Hooper Mizell
- 1882 September – Married William Alexander Donelson
- 1883 William Alexander Donelson, only child, was born
- 1889 Helped organize and became a charter member of the Ladies Hermitage Association
- 1894 Became an early worker in the Tennessee Suffrage Movement.
- 1897 Helped originate and develop the plan for the Woman's Department of the Tennessee Centennial
- 1900 July 21 – William Alexander Donelson, Bettie's husband, was killed by William Giles Baker
- 1907 Chairman of Davidson County Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Chairman of the General Arrangements Committee when the National W.C.T.U. met in Nashville, Tennessee, November 8-13, 1907
- 1917-1921 Regent of the Ladies Hermitage Association
- 1922-1930s President of the Andrew Jackson Society
- 1923 April-May: Delegate to the World Conference of Women in Washington, D.C.
- 1939 December 7th – Died in the old Mizell home at 223 Woodland Street, Nashville, Tennessee

CONTAINER LIST

Microfilm Reel # 1

Box 1

1. Accounts, bills, notes, receipts, etc.
2. By-laws – Ladies Hermitage Association
3. Correspondence – Author Unknown
4. Correspondence – Baldwin-Thomas
5. Correspondence – Outgoing – Donelson, Bettie M.
6. Correspondence – Outgoing – Donelson, Daniel S.
7. Correspondence – Outgoing – Donelson, William Alexander
8. Correspondence – Outgoing – Jackson, Andrew (copies)
9. Correspondence – Outgoing – Jackson, Rachel (copies)
10. Correspondence – Outgoing – Mizell, A.H.
11. Diaries, memoirs, etc. – Journal – Donelson, John (copy)
12. Documents – miscellaneous
13. Funeral notices
14. Genealogical data
15. Inventories and lists
16. Invitations, programs, etc.

Box 2

1. Land grants
2. Legal papers – Articles of agreement and powers of attorney
3. Legal papers – Court cases (depositions, opinions, summons, and statements)
4. Legal papers - Indentures
5. Maps and charts
6. Memorabilia
7. Music sheets
8. Proclamations, resolutions, and statements

Box 3

1. Newspaper clippings – Cleveland, Grover
2. Newspaper clippings – Donelson, John
3. Newspaper clippings – Hermitage Presbyterian Church
4. Newspaper clippings – Historic houses, etc.
5. Newspaper clippings – Jackson, Andrew and Rachel; “The Hermitage”
6. Newspaper clippings – Jefferson, Thomas
7. Newspaper clippings – Ladies Hermitage Association
8. Newspaper clippings – Lafayette, Marquis de
9. Newspaper clippings – Miscellaneous
10. Newspaper clippings – Tennessee Centennial Exposition

11. Newspaper clippings – Various individuals
12. Newspaper clippings – Woman Suffrage
13. Newspaper clippings – Woman’s Christian Temperance Union

Box 4

1. Photographs, drawings, etc. – Architectural drawings
2. Photographs, drawings, etc. – Donelson, Andrew Jackson
3. Photographs, drawings, etc. – Donelson, Bettie (Mizell)
4. Photographs, drawings, etc. – “The Hermitage”

Microfilm Reel # 2

Box 4

5. Photographs, drawings, etc. – Jackson, Andrew and Rachel
6. Photographs, drawings, etc. – Ladies Hermitage Association
7. Photographs, drawings, etc. – Miscellaneous
8. Photographs, drawings, etc. – “Mount Vernon”

Box 5

1. Scrapbook – Articles written about Andrew and Rachel Jackson
2. Scrapbook – Assassination of W. Alexander Donelson
3. Scrapbook – Assassination of W. Alexander Donelson
4. Scrapbook – Ladies Hermitage Association (Volume I)
5. Scrapbook – Ladies Hermitage Association (Volume II)

Box 6

1. Scrapbook – Ladies Hermitage Association (Volume III)
2. Scrapbook – Ladies Hermitage Association (Volume IV)
3. Scrapbook – Ladies Hermitage Association (Volume V)
4. Scrapbook – Ladies Hermitage Association (Volume VI)
5. Scrapbook – Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and Woman’s Suffrage

Box 7

1. Scrapbook – Woman’s Board of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition
2. Writings – Jackson, Andrew and “The Hermitage”
3. Writings – Ladies Hermitage Association
4. Writings – Miscellaneous subjects

NAME INDEX

This is a name index of only the correspondence in the Bettie Mizell Donelson Papers, together with the dates of the letters and information regarding their contents. The figures in parentheses denote the number of letters, if more than one. The last numbers refer to the box and folder in which the material is to be found.

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- Ballard & Wright to James G. Martin, 1821, re: payment of account with Boston Chronicle & Patriot, 1-4
- Baxter, Mary L. to Colonel and Mrs. A. Jackson, 1893, re: requests purchase of several Jackson articles for the Ladies Hermitage Association, 1-4
- Bernay, A. to Committee of the Inauguration, 1833, re: giving supper and ball for the Inauguration of the President, 1-4
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- Champion, S.A. to Mrs. V.L. Kirkman, 1896, re: proxies in the Centennial Exposition Company of Tennessee, 1-4
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