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FIGUERS COLLECTION
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INTRODUCTION

The Figuers Collection was given to the Manuscripts Section of the Tennessee State Library and Archives by the compilers, Sherrell and Alice Overton Figuers of Columbia and Nashville, Tennessee.

The materials in this finding aid measure 1.26 linear feet. There are no restrictions on the materials. Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Figuers Collection may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Figuers Collection, containing approximately 700 items and one volume, spans the period 1764 to 1965 and is composed of Civil War letters and other correspondence, a diary, memoir, biographical sketches, deeds, marriage licenses, military records, newspaper clippings, obituaries, photographs, a thesis, wills, and genealogical data.

There are eleven letters (originals and photocopies), 1862-1864, of Nathaniel Francis Cheairs, a Major in the 3rd Regiment, Tennessee Infantry, C.S.A., and a prominent citizen of Maury County, Tennessee. The letters, written from Fort Warren and Camp Chase Prisons to his daughter, Miss Jennie Cheairs and to his sister, Mrs. N. R. Perkins, comment upon such topics as General Gideon Pillow's conduct at Fort Donelson, treatment and health of prisoners, and conditions on his Maury County farm. Among those mentioned are General Don Carlos Buell, T. J. Davidson, General Alexander McDowell McCook, General James Scott Negley, and General William Nelson.

The memoir, 1861-1865, of Cheairs details events from February 1861 through his war experiences and his return home to Maury County after the war. A major himself, Cheairs often was in a unique position to observe personally the actions and comments of his military superiors and enemies. At times, he quoted conversations at length, giving rare insight into both the reasoning and personalities of the men involved. It was Cheairs who was ordered by Colonel John C. Brown to deliver the surrender message of General S. B. Buckner to General Grant at Fort Donelson, and it was he who escorted Grant to Buckner's headquarters. In Fort Warren Prison, Cheairs was selected "caterer" for the captured Confederate officers, who were very well treated by prison officials. Exchanged in 1862, Cheairs joined Nathan Bedford Forest and Joseph E. Johnston, with the duty of buying cattle and supplies for the army. Captured by Fielding Hurst on one of these expeditions, Cheair obtained reprieve from the death penalty by appealing to Hurst as a Mason. Others mentioned in the memoir include Edwin R. Glasscock, Andrew Johnson, General William Nelson, Charles F. Smith, and D. F. Wade.

Additional Cheairs material includes an article written by Robert McBride for the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XIII (June 1964), pages 121-135, and a series of articles on Cheairs' Civil War activities published in the Columbia, Tennessee, *Daily Herald*.

The diary of Harriet Pointer Cheairs (1881-1885) reflects life in Maury County, Tennessee, while emphasizing her children's activities.

Land records include the warranty deed, 1813, of Samuel Polk, father of James K. Polk, for land which is now the site of Columbia, Tennessee. Other land records, 1805-1879, are for Williamson County, Tennessee, and Pulaski County, Arkansas.

Military records include an account by Thomas Norfleet Figuers of Civil War activities around Franklin, Tennessee. This account is filed with the military records of the Perkins Family.

A thesis, "Life and Activities of John Overton," by Francis Clifton, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, 1948, pertains to Overton, lawyer and judge of Nashville, Tennessee, founder of Memphis, Tennessee, and close friend of Andrew Jackson.

A photocopy of the original signed statement of Dr. Hanson Catlet, Charles Dickinson's second in his duel with Andrew Jackson, certifies that the duel was conducted according to the previous agreement.

The genealogical material was compiled by Sherrell and Alice Overton Figuers for inclusion in Dr. John Boddie's *Historical Southern Families*, volume 3 and 5. Genealogies and supporting documents show the relation of the Bledsoe, Cheairs, Clendening, Figuers, McCoy, Norfleet, Overton, Patterson, Perkins, O'Neal, Sherrell, Taylor, Worsham, and numerous other families.

There are a number of letters, both incoming and outgoing, of Mr. Sherrell Figuers, and other members of the family who compiled much of the genealogical information. Except for a folder of Mr. Figuers' correspondence which deals with the collection as a unit, the recent correspondence has been placed in folders designated by the family name with whom the correspondence deals. This has been done for the convenience of the researcher.

A second addition to the Figuers Collection consists of two newspaper clippings from THE REVIEW-APPEAL of Franklin, Tennessee, dated November 19, 1970, and April 22, 1971, and a letter written by Sherrell Figuers of Nashville, Tennessee, dated April 29, 1971, concerning the clippings and a visit to his grandfather's house in Fayetteville, Tennessee, ac. no. 71-100.

For additional information see also an addition to the Figuers Collections, the Figuers Collection, Accession Number 1985.009, Microfilm Number 1153.

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3. Biographical – thesis: “Life and Activites of John Overton”
4. Civil War items – Cheairs, Major Nathaniel Francis – Civil War story – six installments in the Columbia, Tennessee, *Daily Herald*
5. Civil War items – Cheairs, Major Nathaniel Francis – Experiences (memoir) and deposition
6. Civil War items – Cheairs, Major Nathaniel Francis – Letters
7. Civil War items – Cheairs, Major Nathaniel Francis – (THQ) article
- 7a. Civil War items – Figuers, Hardin Perkins – Memoir – Re: Battle of Franklin, 1864
8. Coats of Arms – histories – Cheairs and Overton
9. Correspondence – re: Figuers Collection, 1960-1965
10. Correspondence – Cheairs, Nathaniel, Sr., 1846
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Box 2

1. Diary – Cheairs, Harriet Pointer, 1881-1885
2. Exhibits – Bledsoe, Sherrell, and allied families
3. Exhibits – Cheairs family
4. Exhibits – Figuers family
5. Exhibits – Perkins family
6. Homes – Cheairs and Graham families, Tennessee and Florida
7. Land Records – Deeds, maps etc., 1805-1879
8. Legal Documents – Marriage records
9. Legal Documents – Military records
10. Newspaper Clippings
11. Newspaper Clippings – Perkins, Nicholas
12. Photographs
13. Photographs – Rachel Jackson’s birthplace
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Box 3

1. Genealogical data – Bledsoe family – tracing descent of Sherrell Figuers from Colonel Anthony Bledsoe through Clendening, Patterson, and Sherrell branches
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11. Genealogical data – Sherrell family
12. Genealogical data – Taylor family
13. Genealogical data – Worsham family
14. Genealogical data – Manuscript prepared for Overton section, *Historical Southern Families* by Dr. John Bennett Boddie
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16. Addition – photographs

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