



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

GREER, JOSEPH (1754-1831)
FAMILY PAPERS, 1782-1868

Processed by

MWF

Accession Number: THS 179; THS 180
Microfilm Accession Number: 740
Date Completed: November 26, 1968
Location: I-A-4

INTRODUCTION

The Joseph Greer Family (1754-1831) Papers, 1782-1868, consists of 70 items and one volume. The collection occupies .42 linear feet of shelf space and has no restrictions.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Joseph Greer Papers, 1782-1868, consisting of one volume and about seventy items, are composed of an account book, agreements, bills, bills of sale, certificates, correspondence, indentures, a permit, a program, promissory notes, receipts, tax returns and two wills.

The account book was used first in 1784 by Joseph Greer, probably when he was a merchant in Knoxville, Tennessee. Among patrons of his store are: John Shelby, John and Valentine Sevier, Thomas Talbott (sic), Alexander Greer, James Blevins, Edmund Been (sic), purchasing such items as pen knives, sets of buckles, stockings, black silk handkerchiefs, linen, sheeting, etc. The second half of the volume has Greer's son's accounts when living at Cane Creek, Lincoln County, Tennessee, and is preceded by a three-page inventory of stock he had figured silk, embossed lawn, etc. The accounts begin in 1843, and some of the surnames noted are: Pillow, Talley, Blakemore, Jefferson, Dooley, Claiborne, Edmiston, and Crabtree. The accounts go through March 1844.

Included are three agreements: the earliest, 1793, Richmond, Virginia, is between Nicholas Honors Sidonie Fournier and Alexandre Lefebre agreeing to a partnership for trade and speculative cultivation and purchase of lands—"the tract of 640 acres of land in property of us both." An agreement of 1823 is between W. Payton Wells and Joseph Greer concerning a tract of land in Lincoln County, Tennessee. The third agreements, 1828, have to do with land division concerning a Patsy Cock, Will Polk and others.

There are three bills from the Talbot Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee, for the year 1821; and there are six bills of sale, 1795-1829, dealing with the sale of Negroes. Erasmus Gill of Petersburg, Virginia, in 1795, sold a family of Negroes to Joseph Greer for 300 pounds.

Certificates include one of 1816 in which it is stated that Joseph Greer was settled on the east fork of Can Creek in 1807. A certificate of 1825 deals with John and Joseph Greer's mill dam that they built across Elk River in 1823. This certificate has several signatures attesting to the fact that the dam is an obstacle to navigation on the Elk River and deleterious to the merchants of Franklin County by injuring the price of cotton.

Correspondence includes a letter from Willie Blount, Nashville, July 10, 1804, to Joseph Greer appointing him the one to receive the Governor's bond and security for the money Governor Sevier owed to Dr. Hugh Williamson.

There are four letters from George Wilson, three to Greer, and one to his estate, 1809-1833. In his letter of May 31, 1809, from Knoxville, he writes, "As to Knoxville parties gets warmer, society gets worse, money gets scarcer, times harder...." Another letter, Wilson's home two weeks ahead of Greer and he again speaks of the times, ".....remarkably dull the place is overstocked with goods completely." Wilson's letter from Nashville, December 22, 1828, tells of the grand dinner and ball to be held in celebration of Jackson's election and he says it "...will be the most splendid ever given here." His postscript added the following day says that he has heard the sad news [the death of Mrs. Jackson] and of course all is cancelled. His fourth letter, Nashville, November 8, 1833, is to the estate of Greer seeking to hire Greer's Negroes for his tanyard.

There are two letters from Isaac Pitchlynn, dated Choctaw Nation, May 9, 1798, and April 6, 1799, both giving Greer his power of attorney so that he will be able to buy certain lands for himself.

There is a letter from D.J. Puckett in South Carolina, 18-2, asking Greer, who was Clerk of the Court of Equity from 1799-1801 in Knoxville, Tennessee, to certify Puckett's having read law there at the time with a practicing attorney.

Included in the papers is only one letter of Joseph Greer. Dated Knoxville, November 29, 18-3, it is addressed to John Rhea in Congress and Greer is writing for information in settling an estate.

Photographs include three of Greer's twin sons, Thomas and Jacob. In one photograph Thomas is looking at his father's grave and appears to have on his father's clothes because they were too large for him. They resemble the clothes on display in the Tennessee State Museum which supposedly are those Greer wore when he walked to the Philadelphia with the victory news after the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7, 1780.

Indentures include one of 1791 for 1,000 acres in Jefferson County, Tennessee, for Jacob Harmon, probably Joseph Greer's father-in-law.

There is also a permit which was given to Greer's son, Joseph H. Greer, in 1864, allowing him to purchase goods in Shelbyville, Bradford County, Tennessee, and transport the same to his home in Lincoln County within the Federal lines.

There are ten tax returns for Joseph Greer from 1811-1830, showing the large acreage he owned, most of it on the East Fork of Can Creek, Lincoln County, Tennessee.

Included are two wills, that of Joseph Greer, February 23, 1831; and that of John McNeill, Knox County, August 11, 1797, for which Joseph Greer of Knoxville was appointed one of the executors. In this will, it is stated that "Isaac and Cynthia be emancipated and entirely set free." There are also a few miscellaneous items which include a few promissory notes and receipts.

Addition. 3 volumes. 1797-1809. Located at I-A-6; Accession Number, THS 180.

Three account books belonging to Joseph Greer; one, headed Knoxville, October 2, 1797, and continuing through May 21, 1804; another headed Iredell from February 27, 1799, through February 28, 1805; and the third, headed Knoxville from November 21, 1805, through October 4, 1809. This last volume contains a report of scholars between six and sixteen as taken by the school commissioners for the 15th District, Lincoln Co., Tenn., June 30, 1838. The account books show sales of everything from knives to wine glasses, asafetida to muslin.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Joseph Greer was born in 1754 in Virginia, son of Andrew and Ruth (Kincaid) Greer. He became a skillful and tactful Indian trader. In 1780, due to his skill in dealing with Indians, since the trip was through dangerous Indian country, Joseph Greer was chosen to carry the news of the victory at the Battle of King's Mountain (October 7, 1780) to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia. Between the years of 1791 and 1792, Greer came west to present day Fayetteville, Tennessee, to locate his Revolutionary War grant of land, which was 3,000 acres in present-day Lincoln County. He bought 4,000 acres adjoining the grant along Cane Creek and 4,000 acres of bottom land along Elk River below Fayetteville and later 3,000 acres more. Between the years of 1799-1801 he served as a clerk of the Court of Equity, in Knoxville, Tennessee. Between 1802 and 1803 he sold merchandise in Knoxville, Tennessee and then moved to Petersburg, Tennessee in 1804 and built his home. He first married a widow Carter and then Mary Harmon. In 1823, twins, Jacob and Thomas Vance were born. Greer died in 1831 and is buried in Old Unity Graveyard about four miles from Petersburg on the Greer farm.

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

1. Account book, 1784, 1843-1844
2. Agreements, 1793-1828
3. Bills, 1821
4. Bills of sale, 1795-1829
5. Certificates, 1816-1840
6. Correspondence---Incoming---Blount, Willie, 1804
7. Correspondence---Incoming---Miscellaneous, 1797-1848
8. Correspondence---Incoming---Pitchlynn, Isaac, 1798-1799
9. Correspondence---Incoming---Wilson, George, 1809-1833
10. Correspondence---Outgoing---Greer, Joseph, 1803
11. Indentures, 1791-1812
12. Miscellaneous, 1794-1868
13. Permit, 1864
14. Photographs, ca. 1900-1930
15. Power of attorney, 1794-1812
16. Program, 1930
17. Promissory notes, 1795-1825
18. Receipts, 1782-1801
19. Tax returns, 1811-1830
20. Wills, 1797, 1831
21. Sketch

NAME INDEX

This is a name index, together with the date of the letter, to the incoming and outgoing correspondence of the Joseph Greer Papers. The figure in parentheses immediately following the name denotes the number of letters, if more than one. The final number is the folder in which the letter will be found.

Correspondence-Incoming

- Author unknown, written in French, n.d., re: how to write a poem, 7
Blount, Willie, 1804, re: request to Greer to aid in collecting money due Dr. Hugh Williamson, 6
Bradley, Abraham (2), 1802, re: enclosing pay for Edward Teel for his mail route, 7
Brent, Daniel, 1802, re: answering Governor Roane's request to the Secretary of State, 7
Lyle, William, 1797, re: suit to be brought against James Dale, and economic condition of Richmond, Virginia, at that time, 7
Moor, Joseph, 1848, re: asking if his father had served in the Revolutionary War, 7
Pitchlynn, Isaac (2), re: giving Joseph Greer the power of attorney to buy lands for him, 7
Puckett, D.J., 1802, re: his need for a certificate that he read law under a practicing attorney, 7
Wilson, George (4), 1809-1833, re: politics; a slave of Greer's; plans for celebration of Jackson's election; economic state of the times; hiring Greer's Negroes for work in his tanyard, 9

Correspondence-Outgoing

- Greer, Joseph, 1803, re: settling an estate, 10