



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

**Harris/Brown  
Papers,  
1805-2000 (bulk 1805-1947)**

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**COLLECTION SUMMARY**

**Inclusive Dates:**

1805-2000, bulk 1805-1947

**Scope & Content:**

The Harris/Brown Papers span the period 1805-2000 with the bulk of the materials created between 1805 and 1947. The collection is composed of assorted Bible records, broadsides, correspondence, deeds, estate records, funeral notices, genealogical data, indentures, marriage bonds, newspapers and clippings, postcards, promissory notes, published genealogical records, receipts, voter registrations, and wills. These materials relate to the Brown, Bryson, and Harris families of Sumner County, Tennessee. The original order of the collection has been maintained. The papers are arranged according to familial relationships with cross-referenced duplicates in some folders.

The Brown papers, located in folders 1 through 3 of box 1, contain Bible records, correspondence, deeds, estate records, funeral notices, indentures, marriage bonds, newspaper clippings, promissory notes, receipts, voter registrations, and wills. These materials chronicle the descendants of Benjamin Brown Sr. of Albemarle County, Virginia. There are several articles of special interest in Box 1. One is a letter, (located in folder 1 of box 1), dated February 15, 1827, from Samuel Hays to Reuben D. Brown regarding animal husbandry. A slave bill of sale is also of historical value (located in folder 1 of box 1). A Civil War letter, (located in folder 2 of box 1), dated September 20, 1864, is from C. H. (Charles Horace) Brown to his sister, Amanda Catherine Brown. It was written from Rock Island Prison (Illinois) where conditions were miserable. In the letter, he writes about asking his father to send shoes, "as they will not allow boots to come into the prison." The "war record" of Charles Horace Brown Sr. (located in folder 2 of box 1) tells the story of his experiences during the Civil War. The narrative is in his own words, as dictated to Bessie G. Brown, and was written on

April 22, 1904. A letter, (located in folder 2 of box 1), dated November 20, 1910, from W. J. Hale to C. Parker, gives the location of Dr. Lew Brown's grave. Dr. Brown was C. Parker's uncle. Hale served in the Civil War with Dr. Brown and J. R. Parker, C. Parker's father, and states that he was present when Brown "was buried in the honor of War." Another item of note is a 1928 marriage certificate (located in folder 2 of box 1) for Charles H. Brown and Bettie G. Harris. Other articles include the 1883 will of George T. Brown (located in folder 2 of box 1), and correspondence, (located in folder 3 of box 1), dated 1928-1938, regarding attempts to collect on Civil War claims on behalf of Green B. Harris and George T. Brown. Harris and Brown claimed reimbursements for a horse and food taken by the Federal army during the war.

The Bryson papers, located in folder 1 of box 2, contain a broadside, correspondence, lineage information from family Bibles, tax receipts, and a published genealogical record. Among the papers is a published booklet titled "Second Reunion of the Descendants of James and Susan Bryson Hanna held at Bethpage, Sumner County, Tennessee, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1891." Printed in 1892, it contains a genealogical record of the family. Another item of interest is a bill of hire dated January 3, 1826. Peter Brison is engaging four slaves (Nansey, John, Sam, and Standhope) to live with his family and provide "labour" until December 25. The "war record" of G. G. Bryson, detailing his experiences during the Civil War, and correspondence related to the California Gold Rush, dated 1850-1852, are among the papers.

The Harris papers, also found in Box 2, folders 2 through 5, contain Bible records, correspondence, deeds, funeral notices, indentures, newspaper clippings, postcards, receipts, and wills. Several noteworthy items are found among these papers. One is a contract (located in folder 3 of box 2) made between James C. Shackleford and James O. Harris, Tyree B. Harris, J. W. Willis, Henry B. Day, and James Holloway to furnish Shackleford "the necessary equipage and funds to defray all necessary expense from here to California." Correspondence (located in folder 3 of box 2), related to the California Gold Rush, dated 1850-1856, is also included. Another item of note is a letter (located in folder 3 of box 2), dated September 21, In an 1850 letter, R. J. Meigs asks Green B. Harris to come to his Nashville law office to discuss infringement of Zebulon Parker's hydraulic power water wheel patents. An assortment of Civil War-related correspondence should be of interest to researchers studying the War Between the States. One letter, dated June 6, 1861, written by George G. Harris from Fredericksburg [Virginia] to his parents, details standing on picket guard in a lightning storm. Another, dated February 21, 1862, is written by John B. Harris to his father. From Murfreesboro, Harris states that he "heard the Lincolmites had taken Nashville." In an August 1862 letter, James O. Harris tells his parents, "if I ever live to get home I am bound to take Manda and the children and visit the Battlefield of Shilo [*sic*]. Our Cav was all over the field. How we escaped is no telling." An official document (located in folder 4 of box 2) certifies that Captain Landon Carter has taken one chestnut sorrel horse valued at \$90 from Green B. Harris to be used for the Federal Army. The certificate further states that Harris is reputed to have taken the oath of loyalty to the government of the United States. A postcard

(located in folder 4 of box 2) depicts "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and the house where the story was written. Also included in the Harris papers is a letter, dated January 6, 1892, (located in folder 5 of box 2) from G. W. Brown to his grandmother. In it, Brown writes about his children: "I hope to raise them and most of all to be upright, straightforward, honest men, and hope I may live to see them such, for I had rather lay them in their little graves now, than to see them grow up to be drunkards or dishonest and unworthy to wear the name they bear."

**Physical Description/Extent:**

1 linear foot

**Accession/Record Group Number:**

2011-010

**Language:**

English

**Permanent Location:**

V-M-3, Mf. 2001

**Repository:**

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

## **Administrative/Biographical History**

The Brown, Bryson, and Harris families of Sumner County, Tennessee, are directly related. The Browns were descendants of Benjamin Brown Sr. of Albemarle County, Virginia. Peter Bryson and his son, James, owned a blacksmith shop near Donneraille (now called Rogana). The business was in operation by 1819. In 1830, Peter Bryson left the shop and James continued on his own. James was briefly absent while serving in the Seminole War of 1836. In 1850, James O. Harris and Tyree Harris along with William Ellis, Henry B. Day and James Holloway created the firm of Harris, Ellis, Day, and Holloway to lead an expedition of seventeen Sumner County residents from Independence, Missouri, to California to search for gold. While Tyree Harris worked in the gold mines for at least five years, he never made his fortune. Several members of these families fought in the Civil War, including Charles Horace Brown (who was imprisoned at Rock Island, Illinois), G. G. Bryson, George G. Harris, John B. Harris, and James O. Harris.

Source: Information in the biographical note was gleaned from various items within this collection and the following books:

Durham, Walter T. *Old Sumner: A History of Sumner County, Tennessee From 1805 to 1861*. Gallatin, TN: Sumner County Public Library Board, 1972.

Durham, Walter T. *Volunteer Forty-Niners: Tennesseans and the California Gold Rush*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1997.

## **Organization/Arrangement of Materials**

The original order of the collection has been maintained. The collection is arranged according to familial relationships with cross-referenced duplicates in some folders.

## **Conditions of Access and Use**

### **Restrictions on Access:**

No restrictions.

### **Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:**

While the Tennessee State Library and Archives houses an item, it does not necessarily hold the copyright on the item, nor may it be able to determine if the item is still protected under current copyright law. Users are solely responsible for determining the existence of such instances and for obtaining any other permissions and paying associated fees that may be necessary for the intended use.

## **Index Terms**

### **Personal Names:**

Brown, Amanda Catherine, b. 1809  
Brown, Benjamin, fl. 1724-1762  
Brown, Bessie G., fl. 1904  
Brown, Charles Horace, fl. 1864-1904  
Brown, G. W.  
Brown, Lew  
Brown, Reuben D.  
Bryson, George Gillespie, b. 1815  
Bryson, Peter, fl. 1809-1815  
Hanna, James, 1765-1833  
Hanna, Susan Bryson, 1773-1840  
Harris, Bettie G., fl. 1928  
Harris, George G.  
Harris, George T., fl. 1883

Harris, Green Berry, 1859-1940  
Harris, James Overton, 1830-1883  
Harris, John B.  
Harris, Tyree Bryson  
Hays, Samuel, 1783-1868  
Meigs, Return Jonathan III, 1801-1891  
Parker, Zebulon

**Subjects:**

California -- Gold discoveries -- 1840-1850  
Rock Island Arsenal (Ill.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865  
Shiloh National Military Park (Tenn. and Miss.)  
Slavery -- United States  
Tennessee -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865  
Uncle Tom (Fictitious character)  
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

**Geographic Names:**

Albemarle County (Va.) -- History -- Sources  
Bethpage (Sumner County, Tenn.) -- History -- Sources  
California -- History -- Sources  
Illinois -- History -- Sources  
Missouri -- History -- Sources  
Sumner County (Tenn.) -- History -- Sources  
Tennessee -- History -- Sources

**Document Types:**

Bible records  
Broadside (notices)  
Clippings (information artifacts)  
Deeds  
Estate records  
Indentures  
Newspapers  
Postcards  
Promissory notes  
Receipts (financial records)  
Wills

## **Acquisition and Appraisal**

**Provenance and Acquisition:**

The collection was donated by Houston Mason of Gallatin, Tennessee, on January 26, 2011.

## Processing and Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation:

Harris/Brown Papers, 1805-2000, Tennessee State Library and Archives

### Processing Information:

Processing was completed by Lori D. Lockhart in September 2011.

### Related Archival Materials:

The Thorpe Genealogical Collection, 1780-1995 (Ac. no. 99-055), also contains materials related to the Harris family.

### Publication Note:

Creasy, John F., Walter T. Durham, and James W. Thomas. *A Celebration of Houses: Built Before 1900 in Sumner County, Tennessee*. Gallatin, TN: Sumner County Historical Society, 1995. (It should be noted that a photograph of the Harris family is included on page 103.)

Durham, Walter T. *Old Sumner: A History of Sumner County, Tennessee From 1805 to 1861*. Gallatin, TN: Sumner County Public Library Board, 1972.

Durham, Walter T. *Rebellion Revisited: A History of Sumner County, Tennessee From 1861 to 1870*. Gallatin, TN: Sumner County Museum Association, 1982.

Durham, Walter T. *Volunteer Forty-Niners: Tennesseans and the California Gold Rush*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1997.

### Electronic Location and Access:

<http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/2011-010.pdf>

## DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

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### CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Box	Folder
Brown Papers, Book I	1805-1931, 1966, n.d.	1	1
Brown Papers, Book II	1850-1934, n.d.	1	2
Brown Papers, Book III	1900-1947, n.d.	1	3
Bryson Papers	1814-1935, n.d.	2	1
Harris Papers, Book I	1828-1892, n.d.	2	2
Harris Papers, Book II	1850-1856, 2000, n.d.	2	3
Harris Papers, Book III	1857-1934, n.d.	2	4
Harris Papers, Book IV	1869-1935, n.d.	2	5