



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives
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WINCHESTER, JAMES, 1752-1826

PAPERS, 1797-1925

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INTRODUCTION

The papers concern correspondence and accounts of General James Winchester (1752-1826), soldier, merchant, and legislator. Mrs. Louis Farrell loaned the largest portion of the manuscripts for photocopying. The original account books of Winchester and Cage were gifts of Mrs. George Wynn, Castalian Springs, Tennessee and the letter book was a give of Mr. George Winchester, Sheridan, Wyoming. Two letters were gifted by Mrs. Lucy Bailey Clarke, Clarksville, Tennessee.

The materials in this collection measure .84 linear feet. There are no restrictions on the materials. Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the James Winchester may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The James Winchester Papers, containing approximately sixty-six items and seven volumes, cover the period 1797 to 1925. The collection is composed of account books, a biography of James Winchester by John Boddie; correspondence of George and N.B. Winchester from Johnson's Island; a Civil War diary of George Winchester (son of James); genealogical data; "Historical Details" by James Winchester; legal documents; a letter book of James Winchester; photograph; and a sketch of George Winchester.

The three account books are for the general merchants' store of Winchester and Cage located at Cairo near Gallatin, Tennessee, in Summer County, for the years 1818-1819, 1819-1824 and 1826. The store handled almost every kind of product on the market at the time. There are accounts listing sales of iron, groceries, dry goods, shoes, silk stockings, whiskey, and numerous other items. A fourth book for 1811 is on microfilm.

Letters written by George and his son, N.B. Winchester, while Confederate prisoners at Johnson's Island, are in the collection. In addition, there are two letters to General Winchester while he was a prisoner in Quebec, Canada. One letter written by General Henry Proctor to Winchester, May 30, 1813, stated that he had been unable to recover his small trunk of papers but he had information on some papers purchased from the Indians which he hoped were the ones he wanted. He also stated the American newspapers were slandering Winchester and he hoped that the General would be successful over his enemies. The second letter written by H. Butler, February 26, 1814, to Sir George Prevost, Governor General of Canada is concerned with the transmission of a letter to General Winchester in prison.

The original biography of James Winchester from which this copy has been made was given to "Cragfont," the home of James Winchester and one of Tennessee's historic sites.

The diary of George Winchester, while Quartermaster of First Brigade of Cheatham's Division of the Confederate Army, begins July 23, 1862. He described his march across Alabama through Jones Valley and his experiences with Bragg's command during the invasion of Kentucky. The diary ends shortly before the Battle of Murfreesboro where he was captured and sent to Johnson's Island. Genealogical data on the Winchester family was compiled by Louis Farrell.

The diary entitled "Historical Details" is composed of letters and orders, published in the *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C. It is the defense of James Winchester against the accusation that he was responsible for the disasters which befell the left flank of the North Western Army in the War of 1812.

The legal documents comprise commissions to General Winchester and to Hugh Nelson and James White for services performed.

A letter book of James Winchester contains approximately sixty business letters to James W. Breedlove, agent for Winchester and Cage, in New Orleans. He wrote about shipping tobacco, cotton, iron, and other items and about materials received. Transportation was by way of river boats. James wrote his brother, David Winchester, in Maryland concerning land sales and the purchase and sale of slaves. In several letters written to David and one to Andrew Jackson, James discussed the slander against him and his defense which he would publish in the *National Intelligencer*. Other letters were written to George G. Black, R. Brent, Thomas Hill, Randal McGavock, William Nixon, John Overton, John Shelby, James Trimble and Edward Wade. He wrote his nephew,

George Winchester, regarding the sale of Chickasaw Bluffs, the site of Memphis. This property was brought by Andrew Jackson, John Overton and James Winchester and a land company was organized. An inventory of James Winchester's estate, including the books at Cragfont and other personal property, slaves, land, and notes, is in the back of the volume.

A sketch of George W. Winchester by Douglas Anderson was published in the *Nashville Banner*, August 16, 1925, and is found in the collection.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Winchester

- 1752 Born – February 6 in Carroll County, Maryland, near the present Westminster. Son of William and Lydia (Richards) Winchester
- 1760-1775 Educated by tutors
- 1776 Enlisted in Maryland Battalion of the Flying Camp for service in the Revolution
- 1777 August 22 – at Staten Island, was wounded and taken prisoner. He was held for a year before he was exchanged
- 1780 Captured again at Charleston, South Carolina, but was soon released
- 1781 James, as captain, and George, his brother, as lieutenant, fought through the southern campaign under General Greene and were present at the surrender at Yorktown
- 1785 Moved to Middle Tennessee (then the Mero District of North Carolina) and settled on a large tract of land near Gallatin, Sumner County
- 1788 Served in the North Carolina Convention as captain, colonel, and brigadier-general of the Mero District
- 1796 Tennessee admitted to statehood and James Winchester was elected senator and speaker of the Senate
- 1812 Appointed Brigadier-General in the United States Army at outbreak of War with England and placed in command of the Army of the Northwest, succeeding William Henry Harrison
- 1813 January 22 – after defeating the British and Indians in several engagements and constructing Fort Winchester, his forces were surprised and defeated and almost the entire army was killed or captured. Winchester was imprisoned in Canada for over a year
- 1814 Exchanged and placed in command of Mobile District
- 1815 Commanded American forces at Mobile during the time that place was under attack by the British in February
- 1816 Accused by Robert B. McAfee of gross negligence and military incapacity in the River Raisin campaign

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| 1818 | Refused an official inquiry, Winchester published a defense of his conduct entitled "Historical Details" |
| 1819 | Appointed commissioner to run the Chickasaw Boundary Line between Tennessee and Mississippi |
| 1819-1820 | Active in business ventures. He co-founded the town of Memphis and his son, Marcus, was the first mayor of Memphis |
| 1826 | Died – July 26 and was buried at "Cragfont" |

Married (date unknown) Susan Black of Sumner County, Tennessee; they had six sons and six daughters.

The Government seat of Franklin County, Tennessee, was named in honor of General Winchester.

CONTAINER LIST

Microfilm Roll # 1

Box 1

1. Account Book – Winchester and Cage – 1818-1819
2. Account Book – Winchester and Hall – 1819-1824
3. Account Book – Winchester and Cage – 1826
4. Accounts – 1797

Box 2

1. Biography by John Boddie – Chapters I-X
2. Biography by John Boddie – Chapters XI-XXV
3. Correspondence – Bulter - Proctor – 1813, 1814
4. Correspondence – Johnson's Island – George & N.B. Winchester – 1864-65
5. "Cragfont" – Home Built by James Winchester

Microfilm Roll # 2

6. Diary – George Winchester – 1863
7. Genealogical Data – Winchester Family
8. "Historical Details" – James Winchester
9. Legal Documents – Commission – James Winchester, *et al.*
10. Letter book – James Winchester – 1817-1829
11. Photographs – James Winchester
12. Photographs – Susan Black Winchester
13. Sketches – Biographical – G.W. Winchester