

BERRY, WILLIAM WELLS
(1813-1876)
PAPERS
1838-1896

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INTRODUCTION

These are the papers of William Wells Berry (1813-1876) of Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee, druggist, banker, businessman, and owner of extensive land holdings. Most of the materials relate to transactions involving land in either Davidson County, Tennessee, or Jefferson County, Arkansas. The Berry papers were given to the Tennessee State Library and Archives by Frank Berry, Jr., of Nashville, Tennessee, grandson of William Wells Berry.

This collection consists of approximately .42 linear feet of shelf space, and numbers approximately 300 items.

Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the William Wells Berry Papers may be made for purposes of individual or scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection centers upon the papers of William Wells Berry of Davidson County, Tennessee. Berry was a well known druggist, landowner of properties along the Arkansas River, and businessman connected with banking, insurance, and manufacturing interests. His papers, ca. 1838-1896, largely concern his extensive land interests. They consist of correspondence, accounts, bills, and receipts, 1844-1870; Confederate money, oath of allegiance, receipts for cotton crops destroyed for the Confederacy during the Civil War; contract for employment of an overseer, and court cases, 1869-1870; land records, 1830-1893; maps, a memorandum, promissory notes, 1854-1866; slave records, 1841-1853; and tax records, 1848-1894.

His correspondence indicates the extent of his land interests in Jefferson County, Arkansas. Correspondents include Chester Ashley, Dennistown and Company, Thomas S. James, C. D. Johnson, R. V. McCracken, F. W. Royster and Company, R. M. Smith, C. H. Triplett, and Willoughby Williams. The topics concern land bought and sold. Transactions were often handled for Berry through several other people such as C. D. Johnson, an overseer, Thomas S. James, land officer in Jefferson County, R. V. McCracken, who supervised property for W. W. Berry's brother John B., and C. H. Triplett, sheriff and tax collector of Jefferson County. A group of letters from Triplett to John M. Bass, an alderman and mayor of Nashville, concern property matters and tax collections.

The accounts, bills, and receipts were for normal business and personal affairs. Goods were shipped, sold, and bought; account slips or balance sheets were written to record these transactions. Some receipts were for quantities of cotton crops which were destroyed by order of General Beauregard of the Confederate army.

Berry's activities as a landowner along the Arkansas River and in Tennessee are recorded in deeds and indentures covering 1838-1893. Most of the properties were located in Pine Bluff, Little Rock, and Davidson County. Among his recorded dealings as a landowner are receipts for black laborers bought and sold, 1841-1853.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

William Wells Berry

1813 Born to Horatio and Sarah (Godman) Berry, both of Anne Arundel County, Maryland, in Baltimore, Maryland, on June 8, 1813

1829 Completes private school education; begins five years of employment with Keerle and Company, a wholesale drug house of Baltimore, Maryland

1834 Berry moves to Nashville where he uses his prior training in the commercial drug business to establish his own firm, which became Berry, Demoville and Company

1840 Married to Jane E. White, March 10, 1840, daughter of General William White, a member of the Davidson County bar, and an officer under Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812

1854-1862 Member of the Board of Directors of the Planters' Bank of Tennessee

1865-1876 President of the Third National Bank of Nashville

1876 Died, June 15, 1876

William Wells Berry also served as President of the Equitable Insurance Company of Nashville from its inception until his death, and was director of several other insurance and manufacturing interests. He had extensive landholdings along the Arkansas River

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

1. Accounts, bills, receipts? 1844-1848
2. Accounts, bills, receipts—1849-1870
3. Confederate money, oath of allegiance and receipts for crops destroyed for the Confederacy during the Civil War
4. Contract for employment
5. Correspondence? Ashley-Williams
6. Court cases, re: land? 1869-1870
7. Land records? n.d. and 1830-1851
8. Land records? 1852-1857
9. Land records? 1864-1868
10. Land records? 1870-1893
11. Maps
12. Memorandum
13. Promissory notes? 1854-1866
14. Slave records? 1841-1853
15. Tax records? 1848-1894

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This is a name index for the correspondence in the William Wells Berry Papers. Included are the dates of the letters, information regarding their contents, and names of the recipients. The numbers in parentheses immediately following the name denote the number of letters, if more than one. The last numbers refer to the box and folder in which the material can be found.

- Ashley, Chester (3), to William Wells Berry, 1847, re: land in Jefferson County, Arkansas; financial matters, 1-5
- Berry, William Wells, to brother John B. Berry, 1865, re: enclosure of letter from C. D. Johnson, 1-5
- Dennistown and Company (3), to William Wells Berry, n.d., re: lands purchased in 1856, 1-5
- James, Thomas S., to William Wells Berry, 1847, re: deed, 1-5
- Johnson, C. D., to William Wells Berry, 1865, re: conditions on Arkansas plantations of John B. Berry, 1-5
- McCracken, R. V., to John B. Berry, 1865, re: claims against government for cotton destroyed; rental of property, 1-5
- Royster, F. W., and Company, to William Wells Berry, 1887, re: land, 1-5
- Smith R. M., to William Wells Berry, 1870, re: land, 1-5
- Triplett, C. H. (6), to John M. Bass and William Wells Berry, Jr., 1893-1896, re: business; financial matters; land, 1-5
- Williams, Willoughby, to William Wells Berry, 1868, re: offer to sell land in order to pay debts, 1-5