



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives
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GOVERNOR WILLIAM BRIMAGE BATE
(1826-1905)
PAPERS
1883-1887

GP 27

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers of the gubernatorial administration of William B. Bate (1826-1905) contain research material on the history of Tennessee government during the post-Reconstruction era. Bate's terms of office dealt with the problems of the State Debt, which was a plague on Tennessee's growth since the end of the War Between the States. Tennessee's State Treasury contained a deficit of nearly three hundred thousand dollars when Bate was inaugurated as Governor. Most of the business of the State Legislature during the Bate years was dedicated to the elimination of this debt. Governor Bate also is noted for his attempts at the creation of a State Railroad Commission to regulate the rail companies operating within the State of Tennessee. Though intense lobbying efforts by the railroad companies, his attempts at this failed.

Much of the correspondence of this collection involves petitions for appointments from statewide Democratic party members- for themselves or friends. Several positions, such as coal and fuel inspectors, school board memberships, and other local jobs had to be filled, and the local party bosses were intent on filling these positions with loyal Democrats.

Other notable instances in these papers were the dedications of the Washington Monument (to which Governor Bate was invited); the scandal of the State Treasurer, Marshal T. Polk and his flight from the State in face of indictment; and numerous petitions for pardons, involving outrageous crimes.

The papers of Governor William B. Bate will provide researchers of Tennessee much information on State history during the last years of the nineteenth century.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Governor William Brimage Bate

William Brimage Bate was born in historic Sumner County, Tennessee, a county famous for the sterling character of its citizenry and the many famous leaders which it has produced. It was in this setting that William Brimage Bate was born on October 7, 1826, near pioneer Bledsoe's Lick where the early settlers had to contend against a savage foe that waged relentless war against the encroachments of the white man. The future general, governor, and senator was descended from pre-Revolutionary stock, his early ancestors being originally from Saxony who later migrated to Yorkshire, England. The first Bate to settle in America was Humphrey Bate who in early colonial days settled on Albemarle Sound in North Carolina.

The grandfather of William B. Bate was Colonel Humphrey Bate who settled on Bledsoe's Lick in Sumner County where he reared a numerous family. In this ancestral home was born James H. Bate, the father of William B. Bate. James Bate married Elizabeth Brimage of North Carolina from whom Senator Bate derived his middle name. In the vicinity of Bledsoe's Lick were spent the early boyhood days of William Bate. Left fatherless at the early age of fifteen, young Bate decided to seek his fortune elsewhere. His first job was a clerkship on a steamboat plying between Nashville and New Orleans. While his boat was docked in New Orleans, he learned of the outbreak of the Mexican War and he promptly enlisted with a company of Louisianans and went to Mexico. He served out his term of enlistment with the Louisiana troops and then joined a company from his own State. He was made a lieutenant and in this capacity served to the end of the war.

Upon his return to his home in Sumner County, he added to his farming duties that of publisher of a weekly newspaper. *The Tenth Legion*. Next, he ventured into politics by being elected to the Legislature at the early age of twenty-three. His next move found him enrolled in the law department of Cumberland University from which he graduated in 1852. He began the practice of his profession at Gallatin, but in 1854 he was elected attorney-general of the judicial district composed of the counties of Sumner, Davidson, and Williamson, and served in this capacity until 1860.

In 1856, General Bate was married to Miss Julia Peete of Huntsville, Alabama. Four children were born to the couple, all girls, two of whom died at an early age. The marriage was a happy one, indeed, the forty-nine years being marked by mutual esteem and affection.

The rift between North and South ended, temporarily Bate's law practice. Tennessee left the Union reluctantly, as she had voted down the first proposal to withdraw from the Union. But Lincoln's call for troops was met by a speedy rebuke on the part of a majority of Tennesseans. The day after the firing of the first gun at Sumter, Bate enlisted as a private soldier in a company being raised in Gallatin. Subsequently he was made its captain and later elected colonel of a regiment. In the frightful battle of Shiloh, he

received a wound which shattered his leg. For a long time he was at the point of death, and surgeons decided that amputation of the limb was necessary. With a characteristic firmness, Bate vetoed the decision of the surgeons. He recovered from the wound, but was badly crippled. He returned to his command on crutches as a Brigadier-General. Due to his crippled condition, it was thought that he could not remain in active military service and a movement was started to boost him for Governor to succeed Governor Isham G. Harris whose term was on the point of expiration. General Bate promptly declared that he would accept no civil office but would remain with his comrades until the bitter end. He was afterward twice wounded, but so disabled was he from his first wound that he had to be lifted to his horse as he rode at the head of his command. At the battle of Chickamauga, three horses were killed under him. Throughout the frightful clash of arms, General Bate's military career was a story of devotion that bore no weakness and a valor that knew no fear.

When the war was over, General Bate returned to the practice of law in Nashville. He formed a partnership with Judge W.K. Turner who died shortly thereafter. Next came a partnership with Colonel Frank E. Williams which continued until Bate was elected Governor in November, 1882. In the meanwhile he had received a flattering vote for U.S. Senator at the hands of the legislature in 1875, 1877, and 1881 but failed to be elected.

General Bate was inaugurated Governor in 1883 at a time when the refunding of the State debt was still an acute problem of astronomical proportions. In reality, he did not desire nomination and was not a candidate before the Democratic Convention which nominated him. The Democrats were still at loggerheads as to how the debt should be settled, and prospects of a Democratic victory in the gubernatorial race were by no means assured. However, when nominated, he entered upon a vigorous campaign and emerged victorious. His two terms as Governor were free from petty politics, and were characterized by a self-exacting sense of duty and unselfish public service

After a spirited contest, Bate was elected U.S. Senator in 1887. Four times he was elected to this high office, his tenure being terminated by his death in 1905. Few Tennesseans have served in this exalted station for such an extended period. His public service record is indeed remarkable- two years in the Mexican War, two years in the Legislature, six years as district attorney-general, four years in the Confederate Army, four years as Governor, and eighteen years as United States Senator.

Senator Bate's keen sense of public duty impelled him to attend the Presidential inauguration on March 4, 1905. Already suffering from a severe cold, he sat for more than an hour in the inclement weather attending the inaugural ceremonies. The cold developed into pneumonia, and five days later he passed quietly away. A specially chartered train bore his body to Nashville where, at his request, he was buried in Mount Olivet.

Distress at the news of his death was widespread among political friends and opponents alike. After appropriate services by a minister of the Baptist Church, of which Senator Bate was a member, his old comrades of the Frank Cheatham Bivouac and the younger members of the National Guard fired the final salute over his grave.

CONTAINER LIST

Microfilm Roll #1

Box 1

1	Correspondence (Outgoing);	1883	
2	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Abernathy-Austin
3	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Babcock-Butler
4	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Cage-Church
5	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Clark-Cushman
6	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Darden-Dupney
7	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Early-Ewing
8	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Fain-Fussell
9	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Gaines-Guion

Box 2

1	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Hadden, et al.-Hewitt
2	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Hickenbottom-Hunter
3	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Illinois Central R.R.- Isabel
4	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Jackson-Julian
5	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Kallaher-Knott
6	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Lacy-Lynn
7	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Mabry-Mayfield
8	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	McAdam-McWhirter
9	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Meek-Murray

Box 3

1	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Neil-Nixon
2	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Obrien-Ozanne
3	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Padgett-Quintard
4	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Rader-Rutherford County
5	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Saffarhaus-Swiggart
6	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Tankesley-Tinker
7	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Todd-Tyler
8	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Usery-Vickery
9	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Wade-Wright
10	Correspondence (Incoming);	1883	Yearwood-Zacher
11	Miscellaneous Correspondence,	1883	
12	Commissions,	1883	

Box 4

1	Correspondence (Outgoing);	1884	
2	Correspondence (Incoming);	1884	Acuff-Burrow
3	Correspondence (Incoming);	1884	Cabell-Curtin
4	Correspondence (Incoming);	1884	Dailey-Ewing
5	Correspondence (Incoming);	1884	Fader, Frank & Co.- Griffen
6	Correspondence (Incoming);	1884	Hacker-Knott
7	Correspondence (Incoming);	1884	Lackey-Myers

Box 5

1	Correspondence (Incoming);	1884	Neeley-Ryan
2	Correspondence (Incoming);	1884	Sanford-Tuthill
3	Correspondence (Incoming);	1884	Vance-Young
4	Miscellaneous Correspondence,	1884	

Microfilm Roll #2

Box 6

1	Correspondence (Outgoing);	1885	
2	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Abel-Avent
3	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Baker-Butler
4	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Cabaniss-Curtis
5	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Darnell-Dykes
6	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Eames-Ewing
7	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Fairall-Fulkerson
8	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Gaines-Gwynne
9	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Hacker-Hurt
10	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Ingersoll-Jones
11	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Kahn-Lyles

Box 7

1	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	McAdoo-Matlock
2	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Melton-Myers
3	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Naworth-Owen
4	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Palmer-Quarles
5	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Randle-Ryman
6	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Salmon-Swiggart
7	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Tate-Tyree
8	Correspondence (Incoming);	1885	Underwood-Young
9	Miscellaneous Correspondence,	1885	
10	Commissions,	1885	

Box 8

1	Correspondence (Outgoing);	1886	
2	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Adkins-Atkins
3	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Baker-Byrd
4	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Cain-Curry
5	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Davidson-Eustace
6	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Farmer-Griscom
7	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Hadden-Hutton
8	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Ireland-Jones
9	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Kain-Kurtz
10	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Lamb-Lynn
11	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	McAdoo-Muse

Box 9

1	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Nelson-Pyott
2	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Raleigh-Russ
3	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Salmon-Stroud
4	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Taliaferro-Tyler
5	Correspondence (Incoming);	1886	Vance-Young
6	Miscellaneous Correspondence,	1886	
7	Correspondence (Incoming);	1887	
8	Undated Correspondence		

Microfilm Roll #3

Box 10

1	Letter Book,	1883
2	Letter Book,	1884-1885

Box 11

1	Letter Book,	1885-1886
2	Letter Book,	1886

Microfilm Roll #4

Box 12

1	Telegrams, (Incoming);	1882
2	Telegrams, (Outgoing);	1883
3	Telegrams, (Incoming);	1883
4	Telegrams, (Outgoing);	1884
5	Telegrams, (Incoming);	1884
6	Telegrams, (Outgoing);	1885
7	Telegrams, (Incoming);	1885
8	Telegrams, (Incoming);	1886

9	Telegrams, (Incoming);	1887
10	Messages to the Legislature	
11	Proclamations	
12	Proclamations from other States	
13	Resolutions	

Box 13

1	Cases tried in Circuit & Criminal Courts,	1883-1885
2	Reports,	1883-1885
3	Land grants, applications for-	
4	Petitions,	1883-1886
5	Miscellaneous material	
6	Newspaper clippings	

Box 14

1	Petitions for appointments;	1883	
2	Petitions for appointments;	1883	N-W
3	Petitions for appointments;	1884	
4	Petitions for appointments;	1885	
5	Petitions for appointments;	1886	
6	Petitions for appointments;	1887	
7	Oaths of prison officials at Tracy City, Tenn.	1886	

Box 15

1	Applications for Requisitions;	1883
2	Applications for Requisitions;	1883
3	Applications for Requisitions;	1883
4	Applications for Requisitions;	1883

Box 16

1	Applications for Requisitions;	1884
2	Applications for Requisitions;	1884
3	Applications for Requisitions;	1884

Box 17

1	Applications for Requisitions;	1885
2	Applications for Requisitions;	1885
3	Applications for Requisitions;	1885
4	Applications for Requisitions;	1885
5	Applications for Requisitions;	1886

6	Applications for Requisitions;	1886
7	Applications for Requisitions;	1886

Box 18

1	Applications for Requisitions;	1883-1886
2	Applications for Requisitions;	1883-1886

Microfilm Roll #5

3	Applications for Requisitions;	1883-1887
4	Applications for Requisitions;	1883-1887

Box 19

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	A-B
2	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	C
3	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	D-F
4	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	G

Box 20

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	H-I
2	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	J-K
3	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	L
4	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	Mc-M
5	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	N-S

Box 21

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	T-Y
2	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	A-B

Microfilm Roll #6

3	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	C-D
4	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	E
5	Petitions for Pardons;	1883	F

Box 22

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1884	G
2	Petitions for Pardons;	1884	H
3	Petitions for Pardons;	1884	I-J
4	Petitions for Pardons;	1884	K-L
5	Petitions for Pardons;	1884	M-Q

Box 23

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1884	R-S
2	Petitions for Pardons;	1884	T-Z
3	Petitions for Pardons;	1885	A-B
4	Petitions for Pardons;	1885	C-E

Box 24

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1885	F-H
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Microfilm Roll #7

2	Petitions for Pardons;	1885	I-K
3	Petitions for Pardons;	1885	L-M
4	Petitions for Pardons;	1885	N-P

Box 25

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1885	R-S
2	Petitions for Pardons;	1885	T-W
3	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	A
4	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	B
5	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	C

Box 26

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	D-F
2	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	G-H
3	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	H (Cont'd)

Box 27

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	I-L
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Microfilm Roll #8

2	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	Mc-M
3	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	N-P
4	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	R

Box 28

1	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	S
2	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	S (Cont'd)
3	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	T-V
4	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	W
5	Petitions for Pardons;	1886	Y
6	Petitions for Pardons;	1887	

Oversized -- (Mineral & Ore) Map of Tennessee, A.W. Hawkins; 1882