State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives

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

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 17th, 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 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 Lincolniters 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:


**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:**
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**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
Broadsides (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.)


Electronic Location and Access:
DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

CONTAINER LIST

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents/Item Title</th>
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