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Rice, Laban Lacy, 1870-1973 (MSS 605)

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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 605 RICE, Laban Lacy, 1870-1973

8 boxes. 111 folders. 2,160 items. 1887-1988. Originals, photocopies, photographs.

SC2017.28.1; 1982.118.1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Laban Lacy Rice, son of Laban Marchbanks Rice and Martha Lacy and brother of the poet Cale Young Rice, was born in Dixon, Kentucky, on 14 October 1870. In 1879, his family moved to Evansville, Indiana, where his father dealt in tobacco. Rice received his A.B. in 1891, his M.A. in 1892, and his Ph.D. in Latin, Greek and Sanskrit in 1894, all from Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee. At Cumberland, he and brother Cale were star baseball players (pitcher and catcher, respectively) and Rice co-founded the Theta chapter of the Kappa Sigma fraternity. Rice taught at Auburn Seminary in Auburn, Kentucky, then served as professor of English Language and Literature at Cumberland from 1894-1904 (with the exception of 1897-1899, when he was associate editor of *The Cumberland Presbyterian* in Nashville, Tennessee). In 1902, he founded *The Cumberland Presbyterian Quarterly*, a review of theology, philosophy and literature, and served as its editor until 1904.

In 1902, Rice helped to establish Castle Heights School in Lebanon, Tennessee. He served as its headmaster from 1904 until 1913, when he became sole owner and president of the school. In 1916, a plan to affiliate Castle Heights with Cumberland University and to combine the schools under a single management, with Rice as president, was abandoned. Rice converted Castle Heights into a military academy in 1917, earning for himself the honorific "Colonel," then sold the school in 1921. From 1920-1929 he was president of the Junior Military Academy at Bloomington Springs, Tennessee. From 1919-1922, he was owner and director of Camp Kawasawa for Boys on the Cumberland River near Lebanon, and from 1920-1947 he owned and operated Nakánawa Junior and Senior Camps for Girls on the eastern and western shores of Mayland Lake near Crossville, Tennessee. He was also part owner and associate director of Camp Sequoyah for Boys at Asheville, North Carolina from 1929-1936.

In May 1939, Rice was named associate president and chancellor of Cumberland University, where he directed an endowment drive for its law school. He resigned his office in June 1940, apparently due to conflicts over authority with President Ernest L. Stockton. In November 1941, however, Stockton resigned and Rice was appointed president. Upon retiring from the presidency in June 1946, Rice, an accomplished amateur astronomer, donated a building and equipment to establish the Rice Observatory at Cumberland. Over the years, he also donated artwork to various institutions and gave items from his extensive collection of

books and manuscripts to several libraries, including Cumberland and Western Kentucky University.

After his retirement, Rice vigorously pursued his interests in travel, writing and study. He lectured extensively and wrote books and articles on relativity, astronomy, cosmology, and the possibility of life on other planets. He made homes in Ware Neck, Virginia, where he constructed his own observatory, and in St. Petersburg and Orlando, Florida. He established the Rice Planetarium in St. Petersburg in October 1953 and operated it until June 1954; after an abortive attempt to reestablish it at Rollins College in Winter Park, he relocated it to Stetson University in Deland, Florida in 1956. He also presented a telescope to Orlando's Central Florida Museum in 1957.

Rice read widely, wrote poetry, fiction and memoirs, and was an energetic letter-writer to the editors of newspapers, popular magazines and scholarly journals. Politically, he was a staunch supporter of the Vietnam War (although he sympathized with Representative Eugene McCarthy's anti-war views in a 1968 letter to him), a foe of Communism and campus radicalism, and a critic of judicial decisions on school desegregation in the 1950s. Two of the more sensational incidents of his life occurred in 1953, when he shot a would-be suitor attempting to abduct his daughter Katherine from her home, accidentally wounding her in the process; and in 1961, when he used his expertise in classical literature and history to perpetrate a widely reported hoax in which a fictional archaeologist claimed to have discovered the tomb of King Orestes at Mycenae in Greece.

As he grew older, Rice received regular invitations and recognition from Castle Heights and from Cumberland University as a popular speaker, benefactor, former president and its oldest living graduate. Cumberland created the Rice Medal in Astronomy in 1957, and its law school awarded Rice a Doctor of Letters degree in 1959. On his 98th birthday in 1968, he spoke to students for more than an hour, and spoke for 90 minutes on his one-hundredth birthday in 1970, when he was fêted at Cumberland with celebrations that included "Laban Lacy Rice Day" in Lebanon. In 1971, Castle Heights honored him with one of its inaugural "Lux et Veritas" Awards for outstanding contributions to education.

Rice died on 14 February 1973 in St. Petersburg, Florida, and was buried there at Cedar Grove Cemetery. He was predeceased by his wife Blanche Alexander Buchanan (1871-1937), who he married on 23 November 1892. They were the parents of two daughters, Katherine (Rice) Shaw and Anne Hays (Rice) O'Neil.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection consists of correspondence, writings (fiction, non-fiction, autobiographical, scientific), poems, clippings, genealogy, and miscellaneous papers of Laban Lacy Rice. His scientific writing is principally on astronomy, cosmology and relativity. Also included are correspondence and papers relating to Rice's brother, poet and dramatist Cale Young Rice, and his sister-in-law, author Alice Hegan Rice.

Box 1 contains clippings (Folders 2-6), chiefly from local newspapers, chronicling Rice's life and career. Included are lecture announcements, reviews of his books, news of his gifts of books and astronomical equipment, and retrospectives published when he reached his 100th year and beyond. Materials relating to the 1974 dedication of a historical marker at the Dixon,

Kentucky home of Rice and his brother Cale (Folder 7) include clippings and the ceremony program.

The remainder of Box 1 (Folders 8-15) and Boxes 2 and 3 contain Rice's general correspondence. Much of the correspondence relates to his literary and scientific pursuits and is frequently with persons distinguished in their fields. Included are authors' acknowledgements of notices in the *Cumberland Presbyterian*; letters of thanks from recipients of Rice's books; exchanges with scientists and other scholars about their work and ideas; responses to Rice's submission of manuscripts for publication and to his solicitation of endowments for Cumberland University; greetings, invitations and reminiscences from alumni and administrators of Cumberland and Castle Heights; letters of appreciation from patrons of Nakánawa Camps for Girls, especially after Rice's 1947 announcement that he would sell the camp, and in observance of his 102nd birthday in 1972; correspondence regarding lecture arrangements, the relocation of his Florida planetarium, his telescope gift to the Central Florida Museum, and other gifts; his letters to politicians commenting on national issues; letters (genuine and fabricated) relating to his "Mycenae hoax"; and cards and letters of tribute on his 100th and subsequent birthdays. Of interest is a copy (the original is at Cumberland University) of a letter from Dwight D. Eisenhower (Box 2, Folder 10) responding to Rice's request for comment on Confederate tactics at the Battle of Gettysburg. Also included throughout the correspondence are letters to newspapers and journals such as *Time*, *Life*, *Harper's*, *The American Scholar*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *The Atlantic* and the *Saturday Review* in which Rice responds to articles on literary, religious, historical, scientific and political subjects or points out errors in English usage. A separate folder (Box 6, Folder 4) contains Rice's editorializing on race. In letters to the editor and opinion pieces, he reacts to articles on civil rights activism and race relations and criticizes 1950s U.S. Supreme Court decisions on school desegregation.

Box 3 also includes separate folders of Rice's correspondence with Albert Einstein (Folder 9) about his theory of relativity and other ideas, as well as correspondence detailing Rice's gifts of books, manuscripts and artifacts made over a period of years to Western Kentucky University (Folders 10, 11). The correspondence with WKU relates to Rice's gifts of his own papers and to those of his brother and sister-in-law, Cale Young Rice and Alice Hegan Rice (see MSS 47 RICE Collection).

Box 4 contains correspondence, photographs and other papers relating to Rice's brother and sister-in-law, Cale Young Rice and Alice Hegan Rice. Cale's letters to Rice (Folder 1) concern family matters, his and Alice's literary work and health, and their travel to New York, London, Paris and Maine. He also writes of his despondency following Alice's death in 1942. Condolences to Rice following Cale's suicide in January 1943 (Folder 2) include reminiscences and a *Louisville Times* obituary and editorial. Letters from Alice Hegan Rice (Folder 5) concern her and Cale's literary work, travel and family matters, Nakánawa Camp, her reading, and her praise for Rice's books, *Sonnets to B.B.R.* and *A Mountain Idyll* (the latter dedicated to Alice). Other materials include Alice's social calendar for 1941-1942 (Folder 7), her journal of quotes and epigrams (Folder 9) and remarks on short story writing (Folder 10). Rice's essay, "Alice Hegan Rice—Home Maker" and short anecdotes (Folder 8) demonstrate his personal regard for her. Rice's correspondence relating to Alice and Cale after their deaths (Folder 11) concern recordings of Cale's poems made for the blind, acknowledgements from recipients of Cale's books, acknowledgements of Rice's solicitations to publish his writing about Cale and Alice, copyright permissions, a proposal from a Louisville friend to write a novel about Cale and Alice,

and Rice's proposals to establish a writing award at Cumberland University in memory of Alice and Cale.

Box 5 contains miscellaneous personal papers of Rice and his autobiographical writing and reminiscences. Materials relating to Castle Heights Military Academy and Cumberland University include certificates and citations (Folder 1), his grade records from Cumberland (Folder 4) and addresses, reminiscences, and programs in connection with recognitions of Rice by both schools (Folder 5). Papers relating to his membership in the Kappa Sigma fraternity (Folder 6) include correspondence, reviews of his books and articles written for the fraternity magazine, the *Caduceus*, Rice's "ode" read at the 1957 Grand Conclave, greetings and reminiscences sent to other conclaves, and a profile of Rice published in the August 1971 *Caduceus*. Personal and autobiographical writing of Rice's (Folder 9) includes memories of Lebanon, Tennessee and Evansville, Indiana as well as recollections of his childhood, school days and family, and a lengthier reflection, "A Backward Look at Eighty" (Folder 10). Although they contain some autobiographical content, the book-length *Reflections and Recollections*, published in 1961 (Folder 11), and *Obiter Dicta of a Post-Centurarian* (Folders 12 and 13) are more notable as chronicles of Rice's philosophical and intellectual development. Shorter writings (Folder 14) reflect on old age and death.

Box 6 contains mostly Rice genealogy material and Rice's miscellaneous notes, lectures and writing, much of it on scientific subjects. Genealogical data (Folder 1) includes letters with information from other Rice family members, many in response to a 1969 article by Rice in the Providence, Kentucky *Journal-Enterprise*, as well as a copy of Charles Elmer Rice's *By the Name of Rice* (Folder 2). A journal kept over a few months in 1967 (Folder 3) contains Rice's reflections on various topics.

Box 7 contains Rice's writing, mostly fiction—stories, a novel, a script for television, and humorous pieces. Also included (Folder 1) is a series he wrote on American poets for the *Cumberland Presbyterian*.

Box 8 contains Rice's poems, collected epigrams, photographs, and miscellaneous items. Poems (Folders 1 and 2) are arranged alphabetically by title, with a few published versions included. Oversized items (Folder 10) consist of Rice's 1959 Doctor of Letters diploma and his Kentucky Colonel and Tennessee Colonel certificates. Also included are photographs of Rice (Folders 11 and 12), his parents (Folder 18), Rice's homes and observatories (Folders 13-16), and his Doctor of Laws degree ceremony (Folder 17).

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	Laban Lacy Rice – Biographical & Correspondence	1890-1973	507 items
Folder 1	Inventory and separation records		6 items
Folder 2	Clippings on life and career	1890-1949	48 items
Folder 3	Clippings on life and career	1950-1960	54 items
Folder 4	Clippings on life and career	1961-1969	53 items

Folder 5	Clippings on life and career	1971-1973	29 items
Folder 6	Clippings on life and career	n.d.	11 items
Folder 7	Rice brothers historical marker – Dixon, Kentucky	1974	5 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	1897-1939	50 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	1940-1945	26 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	1946-1947	50 items
Folder 11	Correspondence	1948-1949	35 items
Folder 12	Correspondence	1950	52 items
Folder 13	Correspondence	1951	30 items
Folder 14	Correspondence	1952-1953	23 items
Folder 15	Correspondence	1954	35 items
BOX 2	Laban Lacy Rice – Correspondence	1955-1968	481 items
Folder 1	Correspondence	1955	32 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	1956	44 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	1957	64 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	1958-1959	62 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	1960	24 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	1961	63 items
Folder 7	Correspondence	1962	29 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	1963-1964	49 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	1965-1966	31 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	1967	36 items

Folder 11	Correspondence	1968	47 items
BOX 3	Laban Lacy Rice – Correspondence	1969-1988	494 items
Folder 1	Correspondence	1969	81 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	Jan.-Sept. 1970	44 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	Oct.-Dec. 1970	57 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	Jan.-Sept. 1971	22 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	Oct.-Dec. 1971	44 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	Jan.-Sept. 1972	30 items
Folder 7	Correspondence	Oct.-Dec. 1972	30 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	n.d.	24 items
Folder 9	Correspondence with Albert Einstein; associated article	1942-1952, 1988	8 items
Folder 10	Correspondence with WKU and Special Collections Library regarding Rice collections	1943-1956	52 items
Folder 11	Correspondence with WKU and Special Collections Library regarding Rice collections	1956-1971	92 items
Folder 12	Letters to editors and publications	n.d.	10 items
BOX 4	Laban Lacy Rice – Cale Young Rice & Alice Hegan Rice	1896-1979	135 items
Folder 1	Letters from Cale Young Rice to Laban Lacy Rice	1901-1943	37 items
Folder 2	Letters to Laban Lacy Rice regarding death of Cale Young Rice	1943	33 items

Folder 3	Cale Young Rice – Photograph	n.d.	1 item
Folder 4	Cumberland Sports Hall of Fame citation for Cale Young Rice	1979	1 item
Folder 5	Letters from Alice Hegan Rice to Laban Lacy Rice and Blanche Rice	1906-1941	25 items
Folder 6	Alice Hegan Rice – Photograph	n.d.	1 item
Folder 7	List of Alice Hegan Rice social engagements	1941-1942	1 item
Folder 8	“Alice Hegan Rice – Home Maker”; anecdotes about Alice Hegan Rice	n.d.	4 items
Folder 9	Alice Hegan Rice journal of quotes and epigrams	n.d.	1 item
Folder 10	Alice Hegan Rice remarks on short story writing	n.d.	1 item
Folder 11	Letters, etc. regarding Cale Young Rice and Alice Hegan Rice	1896-1970	28 items
Folder 12	“The Poetry and Prose of Cale Young Rice” and “Cale Young Rice and Alice Hegan Rice: The Story of Their Books,” published by Century Co.	n.d.	2 items
BOX 5	Laban Lacy Rice – Miscellaneous; Castle Heights Military Academy and Cumberland University; Autobiographical and personal writing	1887-1979	141 items
Folder 1	Certificates, citations	1950-1979	20 items
Folder 2	Passports, vaccination certificate	1927-1961	7 items
Folder 3	Nakánawa Camps for Girls	1945	2 items
Folder 4	Grade records from Cumberland University	1887-1891	13 items
Folder 5	Castle Heights Military Academy and Cumberland University – Reminiscences, addresses, programs	1946-1972, n.d.	28 items
Folder 6	Kappa Sigma – Correspondence, publications, etc.	1949-1972	45 items

Folder 7	Cumberland College Math Club – Guest book	1967	1 item
Folder 8	Rice Observatory, Cumberland University	n.d.	1 item
Folder 9	Miscellaneous writing – Personal and autobiographical	1961-1970, n.d.	14 items
Folder 10	“A Backward Look at Eighty”	[1950]	1 item
Folder 11	<i>Reflections and Recollections</i> manuscript	1961	1 item
Folder 12	<i>Obiter Dicta of a Post-Centenarian</i> typescript	[1971]	1 item
Folder 13	<i>Obiter Dicta of a Post-Centenarian</i> manuscript and partial printed copy	[1971]	2 items
Folder 14	Writings on old age	1967-1970	5 items
Box 6	Laban Lacy Rice – Genealogy; Writing	1897-1969	128 items
Folder 1	Rice genealogy – Correspondence, etc.	1915-1972	33 items
Folder 2	<i>By the Name of Rice</i> – Historical sketch of Deacon Edmund Rice and his descendants, by Charles Elmer Rice	1911	1 item
Folder 3	Journal of Laban Lacy Rice	1967	1 item
Folder 4	Writing on race relations	1951-1970	23 items
Folder 5	Writing and data on ancient Greece	n.d.	8 items
Folder 6	Writing and notes on Mars, planets, stars	1957-1958	20 items
Folder 7	Writing and notes on extraterrestrial life	1962, n.d.	9 items
Folder 8	“What to Know About Relativity” and notes	n.d.	5 items
Folder 9	Writing on cosmogony	n.d.	5 items
Folder 10	<i>The Universe: Its Origin, Nature and Destiny</i>	1951	1 item
Folder 11	Notes and drafts for lectures “Our Puzzling Universe” and “Origin and Destiny of the Universe”	n.d.	13 items

Folder 12	Scrapbook on Rice Planetarium	1953-1954	1 item
Folder 13	L. L. Rice Planetarium, Stetson University – Report	1962	1 item
Folder 14	Miscellaneous writing – Scientific	1897-1950	6 items
Folder 15	“Behind the Veil,” by Frank Logan Goodwin	1957	1 item
Box 7	Laban Lacy Rice – Writing	1895-1970	54 items
Folder 1	“America’s Poetic Pleiad” articles for <i>Cumberland Presbyterian</i>	1896	1 item
Folder 2	“The Man From Tellereve” and other stories	n.d.	1 item
Folder 3	“Dead Hands”	n.d.	1 item
Folder 4	<i>Gunsmoke</i> scripts	n.d.	3 items
Folder 5	“Our Town U.S.A.”	1965	3 items
Folder 6	Film treatment for “I Wonder What Next?” or “Our Town U.S.A.”	n.d.	3 items
Folder 7	“The Wheel Quiz”	n.d.	1 item
Folder 8	Notes and drafts for “The Wheel Quiz”	n.d.	6 items
Folder 9	“The Bell Witch”	n.d.	1 item
Folder 10	Song lyrics	n.d.	6 items
Folder 11	Miscellaneous writing – Fiction, humor	n.d.	10 items
Folder 12	Miscellaneous writing	1895-1965	15 items
Folder 13	Book jackets	[1946-1956]	3 items
Box 8	Laban Lacy Rice – Poems; Epigrams; Photographs	1890-1971	220 items
Folder 1	Poems (A-M)	n.d.	70 items
Folder 2	Poems (N-W)	n.d.	57 items

Folder 3	Poems and short essays	n.d.	1 item
Folder 4	<i>A Sheaf of Epigrams</i> – manuscript drafts	1963	2 items
Folder 5	Notebook of collected quotations	n.d.	1 item
Folder 6	Collected quotations	n.d.	1 item
Folder 7	Printed items (poems, prayers, programs)	1913-1961	16 items
Folder 8	Discussion questions regarding women	n.d.	1 item
Folder 9	Miscellaneous clippings of interest to Rice	n.d.	1 item
Folder 10	Oversized items list	1959, 1970	3 items
Folder 11	Laban Lacy Rice – Photographs	1890-1971	9 items
Folder 12	Laban Lacy Rice – Photographs	1935-1971	10 items
Folder 13	Laban Lacy Rice homes – Photographs	n.d.	20 items
Folder 14	Rice Planetarium, St. Petersburg, Florida; Telescope, Central Florida Museum – Photographs	1957, n.d. n.d.	2 items
Folder 15	Observatory, Ware Neck, Virginia – Photographs	1947-1953	3 items
Folder 16	Rice Observatory, Cumberland University – Photographs	1946-1957, n.d.	11 items
Folder 17	Doctor of Letters, Cumberland Law School – Photographs	1959	5 items
Folder 18	Laban Marchbanks Rice & Martha Lacy Rice – Photographs	1891, n.d.	4 items
Folder 19	Miscellaneous photographs	1946, n.d.	3 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS RICE, Laban Lacy, 1887-1988
605 1870-1973

Correspondence, writings, photographs, clippings, and papers of Laban Lacy Rice, a Webster, County, Kentucky native, educator, author, lecturer, poet, and president of Cumberland University, Lebanon, Tennessee. Includes his scientific writing, principally on astronomy, relativity and cosmology, as well as fiction, poetry, and autobiographical writing. Also includes some correspondence and papers relating to his brother, poet and dramatist Cale Young Rice, and sister-in-law, author Alice Hegan Rice.

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SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Abbott, Lyman, 1835-1922 B1,F8
 African Americans – Lebanon, Tennessee, 1926 – Relating to B1,F8
 Agnew, Spiro Theodore, 1918-1996 – Letter to B3,F2
 Allen, Alexander Viets Griswold, 1841-1908 B1,F8
 Allen, George Edward, 1896-1973 B1,F10
 Allen, Jane Potter (Mengel), 1888-1952 B4,F2
 Allott, Gordon Llewellyn, 1907-1989 – Correspondence B3,F2
 Alter, Dinsmore, 1888-1968 B2,F1
 Armstrong, Harry L., 1888-1972 B2,F5
 Armstrong, Harry L., 1888-1972 – Photograph B8,F17
 Arnold, William Howard, 1901-1976 – Correspondence B2,F11
 Astrology – Comments about, 1969 B3,F1
 Astronomers
 Astronomical observatories – Florida – Photographs B8,F14
 Astronomical observatories – Florida – Relating to B1,F3,4,14; B2,F3,4,6-8; B5,F1; B6,F12,13
 Astronomical observatories – Tennessee – Photographs B8,F16
 Astronomical observatories – Tennessee – Relating to B1,F2-4,15; B2,F11; B5,F8
 Astronomical observatories – Virginia – Photographs B8,F15
 Astronomical observatories – Virginia – Relating to B1,F3
 Astronomy
 Auburn Seminary – Auburn, Kentucky – Relating to B2,F7
 Authors
 Baker, Ruth (Smith), 1893-1940 B1,F8

Baker, Ruth (Smith), 1893-1940 – Relating to B3,F7
 Barnard, Edward Emerson, 1857-1923 – Comments about, 1968 B2,F11
 Barzun, Jacques Martin, 1907-2012 B2,F4
 Baseball – Cumberland University – Lebanon, Tennessee – Relating to B1,F2,3,9; B4,F4;
 B5,F1,5
 Bell Witch B7,F9
 Benét, William Rose, 1886-1950 B1,F10
 Bergquist, C. Hilding, 1915-1989 – Correspondence B1,F12
 Bernstein, Leonard, 1918-1990 – Letter to B3,F2
 Bernstein, Leonard, 1918-1990 – Relating to B2,F6,7; B3,F2
 Birthday cards B1,F12; B2,F4,10; B3,F1,2,5,7,8
 Bolander, Karl S., 1893-1976 B2,F1
 Bond, Durbin, 1892-1976 B2,F5,6,11; B3,F4
 Bondi, Hermann, 1919-2005 – Letter to B2,F3
 Bradford, Amory Howe, 1846-1911 B1,F8
 Braymer, Lawrence E., 1901-1965 B2,F5
 Brewer, Ernest Mood, 1885-1974 B2,F2,4
 Brewer, Wheaton Hale, 1897-1959 – Correspondence B1,F14; B2,F1; B5,F6
 Brooks, Van Wyck, 1886-1963 B1,F11
 Brown, Francis, 1903-1995 B1,F12
 Brown, Hubert Gerold “H. Rap,” b. 1943 – Relating to B2,F11
 Brown, Lucie Scott, 1916-1992 – Correspondence B3,F5-7
 Browne, Borden Parker, 1847-1910 B1,F8
 Burke, Charles Bell, b. 1867 B1,F8
 Burke, John L., 1900-1973 B2,F2-4,6; B3,F5,6,8
 Burt, Maxwell Struthers, 1882-1954 B1,F13
 Byrd, Harry Flood, Jr., 1914-2013 B2,F10,11; B3,F1,3
 Byrd, Harry Flood, Sr., 1887-1966 B1,F11,14; B2,F5,6
 Cabell, James Branch, 1879-1958 B1,F8
 Camps – North Carolina – Camp Sequoyah – Relating to B1,F9; B3,F7
 Camps – Tennessee – Nakánawa Camps – Relating to B1,F9,10; B2,F2,8,10,11;
 B3,F1,3,5,7,8; B4,F2,5; B5,F3
 Carmichael, Stokely, 1941-1998 – Relating to B2,F11
 Castle Heights Military Academy – Lebanon, Tennessee – Relating to B1,F2-5,9,10,13,14;
 B2,F3,5,6,8,10,11; B3,F1-3,5,6; B5,F1,5
 Cerf, Bennett Alfred, 1898-1971 B4,F11
 Certificates – Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, 1970 B8,F10
 Certificates – Tennessee Colonel, Aide de camp, 1970 B8,F10
 Certificates – Vaccination, 1961 B5,F2
 Childress, Nellie J. “Nell,” 1883-1987 B2,F6,7; B3,F7
 Christmas cards B3,F5,8
 Ciardi, John, 1916-1986 B2,F4,8
 Civil War, 1861-1865 – Campaigns, battles, military actions – Gettysburg, 1863 – Relating to
 B2,F4,10
 Civil War, 1861-1865 – Lebanon, Tennessee – Relating to B5,F9
 Civil rights movement – Comments about, 1951-1970 B6,F4

Clarke, James E., b. 1868? B1,F8
 Clason, Clyde B., 1903-1987 B2,F4
 Clayton, William Lockhart, 1880-1966 B1,F9
 Coblentz, Stanton Arthur, 1896-1982 B1,F9,12
 Coombs, Elizabeth Robertson, 1893-1988 – Correspondence B3,F11
 Cosmology
 Coulter, Ellis Merton, 1890-1981 B1,F12
 Courthouses – Webster County – Photograph B8,F19
 Cousins, Norman, 1915-1990 B2,F2-4,6
 Cowles, John H., d. 1954 – Relating to B1,F15
 Craig, Donaldson, 1883-1966 B2,F3
 Crenshaw, Goldie N. (Rice), 1876-1968 B1,F14
 Crenshaw, Goldie N. (Rice), 1876-1968 – Relating to B4,F1
 Cross, Wilbur Lucius, 1862-1948 B1,F8
 Crossett, Jesse H., 1893-1974 B1,F10; B2,F6,8
 Crossett, Jesse H., 1893-1974 – Photograph B8,F19
 Crothers, Samuel McChord, 1857-1927 B1,F8
 Cumberland University – Lebanon, Tennessee – Relating to B1,F2-5,9,11; B2,F3-5,7,10,11;
 B3,F1-3,6; B4,F11; B5,F1,4,5,7,9
 Cuyler, Theodore Ledyard, 1822-1909 B1,F8
 Dabney, Virginius, 1901-1995 B1,F12; B2,F8
 Davidson, Donald Grady, 1893-1968 B1,F10; B4,F11
 Deans, C. W. B1,F14
 Death – Comments about B5,F14
 Dewey, John, 1859-1952 B4,F11
 DeWitt family – Relating to B2,F11
 Diplomas – Cumberland University, 1959 B8,F10
 Dirksen, Everett McKinley, 1896-1969 B2,F9
 Donnell, Lindsey, 1915-1993 B2,F2
 Dowden, Edward, 1843-1913 B1,F8
 Dowdey, Clifford, 1904-1979 B1,F11
 Downing, Dero Goodman, 1921-2011 B3,F11
 DuBridge, Lee Alvin, 1901-1994 B2,F4
 Du Pont, Pierre Samuel, 1870-1954 B1,F9,14
 Edmunds, J. Ollie, 1903-1984 B2,F2-4
 Edwards, John Bowen, 1883-1971 B1,F14
 Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955 – Correspondence B3,F9
 Eisenhower, Dwight David, 1890-1969 – Correspondence B2,F6,10,11
 Epigrams B4,F9; B8,F4
 Evans, Bergen Baldwin, 1904-1978 B2,F3
 Evansville, Indiana – History B5,F9
 Extraterrestrial beings – Relating to B1,F3,4; B6,F6,7
 Federer, Charles Anthony, Jr., 1909-1999 B1,F11; B2,F5
 Fly, Rosalynd (Karrh), d. 1971 B2,F8-11
 Fly, Rosalynd (Karrh), d. 1971 – Photograph B8,F11
 Fly, Rosalynd (Karrh), d. 1971 – Relating to B3,F4

Folk songs B7,F10
 Fraternities and sororities – Kappa Sigma B5,F6
 Freeman, Douglas Southall, 1886-1953 B1,F12
 French, Frank A. B2,F3
 Frost, Wesley, 1884-1968 B2,F3
 Fulbright, James William, 1905-1995 – Letters to B2,F9
 Furman, Lucy, 1869-1958 B1,F8
 Garner, T. F. B1,F9
 Garrett, Paul Loos, 1893-1955 – Correspondence B1,F13; B3,F10
 Gladden, Washington, 1836-1918 B1,F8
 Glendinning, Richard E., 1917-1988 B2,F6
 Golladay, George S. – Relating to B3,F8
 Goodwin, Frank Logan, b. 1887 – Correspondence B2,F3,4; B6,F15
 Green, Grafton, 1872-1947 B1,F8
 Hall, Donald S. B2,F7,8
 Harlan, Paul M., 1897-1984 B5,F6
 Harris, Samuel, 1814-1899 B1,F8
 Hartnett, Thomas Raymond, 1900-1951 B1,F11
 Havens, Charles B. B2,F2,3
 Haydn, Hiram Collins, 1907-1973 – Correspondence B1,F11-13,15; B2,F1,3,11; B3,F2,3
 Helm, Harold Holmes, 1900-1985 B2,F4
 Helm, Margie May, 1894-1991 B3,F10,11; B4,F2
 Herring, Woodrow B1,F10
 Historic houses – Webster County B1,F7,8
 Historic houses – Webster County – Photographs B8,F13
 Hoaxes B1,F4; B2,F6,11; B5,F1
 Hocking, William Ernest, 1873-1966 B4,F11
 Holman, Ross L., 1884-1982 B1,F12
 Holt, Hamilton, 1872-1951 B4,F2
 Hoover, John Edgar, 1895-1972 B2,F8
 Howison, George Holmes, 1834-1916 B1,F8
 Hughes, Charles Evans, Sr., 1862-1948 B1,F9,10
 Hull, Cordell, 1871-1955 B1,F9
 Hull, Cordell, 1871-1955 – Relating to B1,F9
 Humphreys, Allison B., 1906-1993 B2,F10,11; B3,F3
 Hutchins, Robert Maynard, 1899-1977 B1,F9
 Integration and segregation, Racial – Comments about, 1951-1970 B2,F3-6; B6,F4
 Jae-seon, John A. Choi, 1912-2008 B2,F8
 Jae-seon, John A. Choi, 1912-2008 – Relating to B5,F1
 James, Alice Howe (Gibbens), 1849-1922 B1,F8
 James, William, 1842-1910 B1,F8
 Jamison, John A., 1916-1999 B1,F11,14; B2,F4-6; B3,F1,3
 Johnson, C. Walton, 1886-1967 B1,F9,11
 Johnson, C. Walton, 1886-1967 – Relating to B2,F10
 Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 1908-1973 – Letters to B2,F9,11
 Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 1908-1973 – Relating to B2,F9

Jones, Jesse Holman, 1874-1956 B1,F9
 Justice, Joseph, 1916-2005 B2,F2
 Kallen, Horace Meyer, 1882-1974 B1,F13
 Karrh, Lona Olive, 1894-1996 B3,F4,5
 Kelly, Eleanor Mercein, 1880-1968 B1,F10
 Kelton, Leslie E., Jr., 1897-1981 B1,F9,10
 Kemp, Eva Deane, 1910-1981 B1,F7; B3,F5,6
 Kennedy, Edward Moore "Ted," 1932-2009 B3,F1
 Kennedy, John Fitzgerald, 1917-1963 B2,F5
 Kennedy, Robert Francis, 1925-1968 B2,F4
 Kimbrough, Charles Hulin, b. 1880 B1,F8
 Knecht, Karl Kae, 1883-1972 B2,F6; B5,F1
 Knopf, Alfred Abraham, Sr., 1892-1984 B2,F8
 Lebanon, Tennessee – History B5,F9
 Lebanon, Tennessee – Social life and customs, 1880s B5,F9
 Lee, Robert Edward, 1807-1870 – Comments about, 1950 B1,F12
 Lewis, Fulton, Jr., 1903-1966 B1,F12
 Lisman, Thomas Perry, b. 1856 B1,F8
 Livingstone, Richard Winn, 1880-1960 B2,F3
 Loomis, Clarence, 1889-1965 B1,F9; B4,F2,11
 Lowes, John Livingston, 1867-1945 B1,F8
 Lucas, Ralph A., 1911-1990 – Correspondence B2,F9; B3,F1,5
 Lynes, Russell, 1910-1991 B1,F11,12,14
 MacArthur, Douglas, 1880-1964 B2,F6
 MacDougall, Curtis Daniel, 1903-1985 B2,F6,7
 Marshall, Harley C. B1,F10,11,13
 Mason, Richard K. "Dick," 1883-1973 B2,F3,4,6-11; B3,F1,3-6
 Mathews, Shailer, 1863-1941 B1,F8
 McCarthy, Eugene Joseph "Gene," 1916-2005 – Correspondence B2,F11
 McDarment, Corley P., 1891-1987 B2,F2
 McKean, Hugh F., 1908-1995 – Correspondence B1,F15; B2,F1,2
 McVey, Frank LeRond, 1869-1953 B4,F2
 Mead, Margaret, 1901-1978 – Letter to B3,F1
 Mencken, Henry Louis, 1880-1956 – Comments about, 1924 B4,F1
 Mencken, Henry Louis, 1880-1956 – Relating to B1,F12
 Merritt, Dixon Lanier, 1879-1972 B2,F8
 Mims, Edwin, 1872-1959 B1,F8
 Mitchell, Elisabeth "Mitch," 1912-2000 – Comments about, 1947 B1,F10
 Mitchell, John Ridley, 1877-1962 B1,F11
 Moore, John Trotwood, 1858-1929 B1,F8
 Moore, Mary Elizabeth (Taylor) Leiper, 1885-1973 – Correspondence B1,F14; B3,F10,11;
 B4,F1
 Morgan, Christopher – Correspondence B3,F5,6
 Morris, Charles E. K., Jr. B2,F10
 Morrow, James Vernon B2,F4
 Moses, Herbert H. B2,F4,6; B3,F3

Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch, 1901 – Relating to B4,F5
 Munitz, Milton Karl, 1913-1995 – Letter to B2,F4
 Münsterberg, Hugo, 1863-1916 B1,F8
 Neal, Mary Julia, 1905-1995 – Correspondence B3,F11; B6,F1
 Nelson, Donald Marr, 1888-1959 B1,F9
 Nelson, Frederic C., d. 1982 B1,F12
A Night in Avignon, 1907 – Relating to B4,F1
 Nixon, Richard Milhous, 1913-1994 – Correspondence B1,F15; B2,F8; B3,F1,2-4,8
 Noyes, Alfred, 1880-1958 B1,F8
 Noyes, Alfred, 1880-1958 – Comments about, 1913 B4,F1
 Ocean travel, 1961 – Relating to B8,F7
 Ochs, Adolph Shelby, 1895-1974 B1,F14; B2,F2,6
 Ogram, Alfred, 1898-1995 B3,F5
 O'Neil, Anne Hays (Rice) "Annie" – Letter to B2,F3
 Orrell, May B2,F3
 Paley, Irving H., 1915-1993 B1,F12
 Parker, Fess Elisha, Jr., 1924-2010 – Letter to B3,F3
 Passports, 1927-1961 B5,F2
 Phelps, William Lyon, 1865-1943 B1,F8
 Poetry B1,F2; B2,F3,4,6-10; B3,F2,3,6,7; B3,F12; B4,F1; B5,F5; B8,F1-3,9
 Poets
 Posey, J. Wood B1,F9
 Prayers B7,F12; B8,F7
 Preston, Edwin Smith, 1901-1978 B1,F10
 Prothro, James Thompson "Doc," 1893-1971 B1,F9; B2,F10
 Prothro, James Thompson "Doc," 1893-1971 – Relating to B2,F10
 Race relations – Comments about, 1951-1970 B6,F4
 Reams, Henry Frazier, Sr., 1897-1971 B1,F9
 Relativity (Physics)
 Rhine, Joseph Banks, 1895-1980 B2,F2
 Rhine, Louisa E. B3,F6
 Rice, Alice (Caldwell) Hegan, 1870-1942 – Photograph B4,F6
 Rice, Alice (Caldwell) Hegan, 1870-1942 – Relating to B3,F10; B4,F1,7-12
 Rice, Blanche Alexander (Buchanan), 1871-1937 – Letters to B4,F5
 Rice, Blanche Alexander (Buchanan), 1871-1937 – Relating to B4,F1
 Rice, Cale Young, 1872-1943 B4,F1
 Rice, Cale Young, 1872-1943 – Photograph B4,F3
 Rice, Cale Young, 1872-1943 – Relating to B1,F7; B2,F11; B3,F7,10; B4,F2,4,5,8,11,12
 Rice family – Relating to B5,F9; B6,F1,2
 Rice, Laban Lacy, 1870-1973 – Photographs B8,F11,12,14-17
 Rice, Laban Marchbanks, 1838-1915 – Photographs B8,F18
 Rice, Laban Marchbanks, 1838-1915 – Relating to B1,F8; B6,F1
 Rice, Lacy I. B1,F11
 Rice, Martha Ann (Lacy), 1848-1882 – Photograph B8,F18
 Rickover, Hyman George, 1900-1986 B2,F6
 Robertson, Absalom Willis, 1887-1971 B2,F6

Robertson, John Fite, 1894-1976 B3,F5
 Rockefeller, Abigail Greene "Abby" (Aldrich), 1874-1948 – Comments about, 1948 B1,F11
 Rockefeller, David, 1915-2007 – Correspondence B2,F11
 Rockefeller, John Davison, Jr., 1874-1960 B1,F11
 Rockefeller, John Davison, Jr., 1874-1960 – Relating to B2,F4,5
 Schad, Walter C. B2,F4
 Schairer, Otto S., 1879-1976 B2,F1,2
 Schwarzschild, Martin, 1912-1997 B1,F11
 Shapley, Harlow, 1885-1972 B1,F9; B2,F2
 Sharp, Dallas Lore, 1870-1929 B1,F8
 Shaw, Katherine (Rice), d. 1954 – Relating to B1,F3
 Shaw, Lacy Rice, 1920-1981 – Letter to B1,F15
 Sherman, Stuart Pratt, 1881-1926 B1,F8
 Shipp, Ola Nancy (Echols), 1878-1963 B1,F10
 Silvers, Robert Benjamin, 1929-2017 B2,F4
 Smyth, Newman, 1843-1925 B1,F8
 Sperry, Willard, Learoyd, 1882-1954 B1,F8
 Spitz, Armand Neustadter, 1904-1971 B1,F15
 Spitzer, Lyman Strong, Jr., 1914-1997 B1,F14
 Stahlman, James Geddes, 1893-1976 B1,F15; B2,F2,6,8; B3,F1,3,4
 Stern, Phillip D., 1913-1991 B2,F1
 Stickney, Edith (Cooley), 1869-1951 – Relating to B1,F13
 Stockton, Ernest Looney, Sr., b. 1888 – Comments about, 1943 B1,F9
 Stockton, Ernest Looney, Jr., 1917-1984 – Correspondence B2,F4-6,8-11;
 B3,F1-8; B4,F11
 Stockton, Ernest Looney, Jr., 1917-1984 – Photographs B8,F11,16,17
 Streete, L. A. B3,F7
 Strouse, Mose A., 1875-1966 B2,F6
 Struve, Otto, 1897-1963 B1,F11; B2,F2
 Taft, Robert Alphonso, 1889-1953 B1,F12
 Taylor, Horace, 1894-1970 B1,F13; B3,F8
 Thomas, Norman Mattoon, 1884-1968 B1,F15
 Thompson, Edwin Kelly, 1909-1993 – Correspondence B3,F11
 Tombaugh, Clyde William, 1906-1997 B2,F8
 Van Biesbroeck, George A., 1880-1974 – Photographs B8,F11
 Viereck, Peter Robert Edwin, 1916-2006 – Comments about, 1951 B1,F13
 Vietnam War, 1961-1975 – Comments about, 1965-1969 B2,F9,11; B3,F1,8
 Von Weizsäcker, Carl Friedrich, 1912-2007 B1,F12
 Wakefield, Christopher (fictitious person) B2,F6
 Walters, Herbert Sanford, 1891-1973 B2,F8
 Watson, John, 1847-1939 B1,F8
 Whipple, Fred Lawrence, 1906-2004 – Correspondence B1,F11
 Whipple, Fred Lawrence, 1906-2004 – Relating to B1,F11
 Wicke, Reginald Julius, 1901-1976 B1,F11,13; B2,F7
 Williams, Theodore Samuel "Ted," 1918-2002 B2,F3
 Wilson, Albert George, 1918-2012 B1,F15

Women – Attitudes toward B7,F11; B8,F8
Woodberry, George Edward, 1855-1930 B1,F8
York, Alvin Cullum, 1887-1964 B1,F8

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Castle Heights School – Lebanon, Tennessee
See also:
Castle Heights Military Academy

Choi, John A., 1912-2008
See also:
Jae-seon, John A. Choi

Cumberland College – Lebanon, Tennessee
See also:
Cumberland University

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