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Recommended Citation

Folklife Archives, Manuscripts &, "Hamilton Family Collection (MSS 698)" (2020). *MSS Finding Aids*. Paper 4863.

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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 698 HAMILTON Family Collection

1½ boxes. 25 folders. 291 items. 1852-1902. Originals, photograph.

2008.1.63

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Eleazer Hamilton (1793-1871) was born on Whites Creek, Davidson County, Tennessee, and at the time of his death lived on his farm at Stewarts Ferry in the same county. In 1823 he married Emily Perry (1807-1895), the daughter of Burrell Perry and Esther (Bird) Perry. A veteran of the War of 1812 and the Creek War, Eleazer is thought to have acquired considerable property holdings during his life. Eleazer's death without a will appears to have left his children and their descendants with shares in his estate that they managed, negotiated and traded over subsequent years.

Eleazer and Emily Hamilton were the parents of ten sons and two daughters. Although Eleazer was a Unionist during the Civil War, four of his sons – John ("Jack"), Joseph, David and Eleazer ("Dent") – served in the Confederate Army. All survived except Eleazer, who died as a prisoner of war at Camp Chase, Illinois. Three other sons also died relatively young. Burrell Perry Hamilton died in 1846; Alexander Bird Hamilton died in 1861 in Texas, where he was living with a cousin; and Lucien Franklin Hamilton died in 1867 in Texas along with his wife, leaving two young children, Laura and Edwin C. Hamilton, who were taken in by their aunts and uncles in Tennessee and Texas.

The Hamilton children most represented in this collection engaged in farming in Middle Tennessee. In addition, three Hamilton sons were teachers: Tolbert Fanning Hamilton, who taught at Mt. Pleasant Institute in Maury County, Tennessee; John Hall "Jack" Hamilton, who taught at Union Seminary near Lebanon, Tennessee; and Joseph Porter Hamilton, who (frequently with his wife Josephine) taught at several schools, including Mt. Pleasant Institute with brother Tolbert; Shelbyville Female College in Shelbyville, Tennessee, where he also served as president; Cumberland Female College in McMinnville, Tennessee; Mary Sharp College in Winchester, Tennessee; and Franklin Female College in Franklin, Kentucky, where he also served as president.

Several of Emily (Perry) Hamilton's siblings emigrated from Tennessee to Texas prior to the Civil War. They and their children engaged in farming and other business in Texas and Mississippi.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection contains correspondence of members of the Hamilton family of Middle Tennessee and of other family members in Texas and Mississippi. Much of the correspondence consists of letters to Temperance Elizabeth “Lizzie” Hamilton, a daughter of Eleazer and Emily Hamilton, from her siblings, nieces and nephews, sent to her at her home at Stewarts Ferry (Davidson County), Tennessee. The collection also includes letters exchanged between other relatives. An inventory is in Box 1, Folder 1 together with genealogical notes, but the notes are intended to show relationships among the correspondents featured most prominently in the collection and should not be construed as a comprehensive genealogy.

Box 1, Folder 2 contains two letters to Lizzie Hamilton from her brother John Hall Hamilton, written while he was a student at Union University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He writes of his studies with “Jo” (presumably brother Joseph P. Hamilton) and his wish to return home to vote for American (Know Nothing) Party candidates Millard Fillmore and Andrew Jackson Donelson. Teaching in Lebanon, Tennessee a few years later, he invites Lizzie to a declamation competition and tells her of his plan to propose to “Miss Pearre” (Mary Louise Pearre, whom he eventually marries in 1865).

Box 1, Folder 3 contains correspondence of Lizzie Hamilton’s brother Joseph Porter Hamilton. His letters are mostly to Lizzie but he also writes his sister Mary, his brother Henry, and his nephew Edwin C. Hamilton. The letters begin during his student days at Union University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where he works toward a teaching career and becomes engaged to “Nannie,” although the marriage seems not to have taken place. Joseph is particularly solicitous of Lizzie as he helps manage her finances and investments, confers with her on their respective farming operations and economics, supplies family news, proposes land purchases, and frequently invites her to live with him and his wife Josie. He also takes an interest in his rather unpromising nephews Edwin “Ed” C. Hamilton, Dan Hamilton, and James Winter Hamilton, the sons, respectively, of his brothers Lucien Franklin Hamilton, Tolbert Fanning Hamilton and Henry Clay Hamilton. In particular, he attempts to help Ed get a teaching position, but lectures him about his immaturity and failure to train in progressive teaching methods. In 1895, during a stay in southern California because of wife Josie’s health, Joseph makes some observations about prodigious fruit growing and about graduates of Northeastern schools who arrive there looking for a “soft place.” He receives a letter in 1898 from cousin Patience (Hall) Smith in Texas with a detailed update on her family. His 1900 letter to Lizzie supplies some genealogical information about their mother’s family, the Perrys, after he meets with General William F. Perry, a teacher at Ogden College in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Joseph occasionally comments on the fortunes of the various schools at which he teaches, principally by supplying enrollment figures. He also writes brother Henry in 1902 regarding some Texas land that may have been deeded to their late brother Lucien.

Box 1, Folder 4 contains two items of correspondence of Lizzie Hamilton’s brother David Dickerson Hamilton: a letter to him from an unnamed brother in school telling of his studies and his pleasure in a young woman’s friendship, and a postcard from David to Lizzie with family news.

Box 1, Folder 5 contains correspondence of Lizzie Hamilton’s brother Tolbert Fanning Hamilton, consisting mostly of letters written to Lizzie while he was a teacher at Mt. Pleasant Institute in Maury County, Tennessee (their brother Joseph was principal, Joseph’s wife Josephine “Josie” was also a teacher, and nephew Yandell Neal was a student). He discusses

having some shirts made and asks her advice on proposing to his “sweetheart.” He also discusses a plan among the Hamilton siblings for buying or exchanging their inherited interests in family land.

Box 1, Folder 6 contains correspondence of Lizzie Hamilton’s brother Henry Clay Hamilton. He writes to his daughter Margaret (“Mag”) describing a vacation in Florida, and receives a letter from Thaddeus Hamilton, the son of his deceased brother Eleazer. Residing with his family on land belonging to “Uncle Jim” (presumably Henry’s brother James T. Hamilton) in Ballard County, Kentucky, “Thad” laments hard economic times for farmers and asks about the distribution of assets from grandfather Eleazer Hamilton’s estate.

Box 1, Folder 7 contains correspondence of Lizzie Hamilton’s niece May (Hamilton) Baker, a daughter of her brother Henry Clay Hamilton. Letters written when May was a schoolgirl to her mother, sister Kate, aunt Lizzie and grandmother Emily Hamilton describe her youthful concerns; her letter from McMinnville, Tennessee recounts the excitement of having a “flying Jenny” in town and of evening “serenades,” first by girls at Cumberland Female College and then by some local African-American boys. After her marriage, she writes to her father in Florida with news from home in Winchester, Tennessee. Letters to May are from a Tennessee cousin, William Hulme, playfully describing his romantic travails, and from another young cousin in Falls County, Texas.

Box 1, Folder 8 contains letters of Lizzie Hamilton’s niece Bird (Hamilton) Calvert, a daughter of her brother Henry Clay Hamilton. She writes to her siblings and to her aunt Lizzie with family news, including items relating to her mother’s family, the Hulmes, and of her travel with sister May to Mary Sharp College in Winchester, Tennessee.

Box 1, Folder 9 contains letters of Lizzie Hamilton’s niece, Catherine “Kate” Hamilton, a daughter of her brother Henry Clay Hamilton. She writes to Lizzie from Nashville with Hulme and other family news, including the elopement of her cousin Laura Hulme.

Box 1, Folder 10 contains correspondence of Lizzie Hamilton’s niece, Margaret “Mag” Hamilton, a daughter of her brother Henry Clay Hamilton. She writes from school in McMinnville, Tennessee, and sends newsy letters to Lizzie about family health and activities in and around Nashville, including her work at the photography and portrait studio of Calvert Bros. & Taylor.

Box 1, Folder 11 contains letters to Lizzie Hamilton from her sister Mary Esther (Hamilton) Neal. She writes of her family’s struggles with health and farm work, of other relatives, and of news in her community of Triune, Tennessee. She asks Lizzie to write to her son Yandell, who she fears is homesick after he leaves for school at Mt. Pleasant Institute. She also writes about maintaining a household and farm after the death of her husband in 1897.

Box 1, Folder 12 contains correspondence of Thomas B. Neal, the husband of Lizzie’s sister Mary Esther (Hamilton) Neal. Two letters to Lizzie ask for her support when Mary and their son Yandell have health problems, and a letter from the Wilson County (Tennessee) Court relates to the settlement of his mother Jane’s estate.

Box 1, Folder 13 contains correspondence of Yandell Hamilton Neal, the son of Lizzie’s sister Mary Esther (Hamilton) Neal and her husband Thomas. He writes to Lizzie from school at Mt. Pleasant Institute, and later from Antioch, Tennessee of his family’s struggles with their health and with farm life. A cousin writes to him from Eureka Springs, Arkansas, where she appears to be sojourning for health reasons; she writes of seeing two curiosities, a “petrified baby” and a stone carving found in a nearby creek.

Box 1, Folders 14 and 15 contain correspondence of Laura Lee (Hamilton) Flake, the daughter of Lizzie Hamilton's brother Lucien Franklin Hamilton and his second wife Rebecca Mullins. Included are letters to her brother Edwin "Ed," but most are written to her aunt Lizzie after she moves from Tennessee to Navasota, Texas to live with an aunt on her mother's side. She writes about the families of her father's first wife (Cabler) as well as her mother's (Mullins), but also muses frequently about Hamilton aunts, uncles and cousins in Tennessee and expresses particular concern for brother Ed. After her marriage, she writes about her household life, her relations with her husband's family, and the growth of her young son. Her letters to Ed express worry over his health and his neglect of the Christian faith, and she is distraught and guilt-ridden when he dies early in 1895, apparently of tuberculosis. Her letters to her uncle Tolbert Hamilton discuss a division of funds from the estate of her grandmother Emily (Perry) Hamilton and outstanding accounts between family members.

Box 1, Folders 16 and 17 contain correspondence of Edwin Cabler Hamilton, the son of Lizzie Hamilton's brother Lucien Franklin Hamilton and his second wife Rebecca Mullins. Most of his letters are to his aunt Lizzie, written while residing with his Mullins relatives in Rutherford County, Tennessee; during his studies at Burritt College in Spencer, Tennessee; and during his work for an express company, travelling by rail between Nashville and Hickman, Kentucky. Frequently discussed are his health problems, need for clothing, lack of money, relationships with his professors at Burritt College, and flirtations with young women. He writes of his wish to marry and join a church, but never achieves either goal. His fraught relations with his uncles David Dickerson Hamilton ("Dick") and Tolbert Fanning Hamilton ("Tollie") appear in a letter in which he blames his reluctance to write on their harsh criticism of his punctuation. Like his sister Laura, he maintains an interest in news about his extended family.

Box 1, Folder 18 contains miscellaneous correspondence of Lizzie Hamilton. She receives letters with news from various family members, and writes to her sister Mary about her health, farm production, and local religious activity. She writes the brother of her sister-in-law Sarah (Buckner) Hamilton in Paducah, Kentucky in search of a job for her nephew Ed Hamilton, and receives a letter of condolence from one of his female friends on Ed's death. Like brother Henry (see Box 1, Folder 3), she speculates to Mary in 1899 about unclaimed land in Texas and whether it was owned by their brother Alexander.

Box 1, Folder 19 contains correspondence of Sarah (Buckner) Hamilton Jackson, the widow of Lizzie's brother Eleazer Hamilton. In three letters written from Caldwell County, Kentucky over a 25-year period, she updates Lizzie's brothers Henry and Joseph on her children, their families, and her siblings. Her young daughter Maud also includes a letter to Henry that supports her description of herself as "wild" and "full of life."

Box 1, Folder 20 contains correspondence of "A.C." Hamilton, who appears to be Lizzie's brother Alexander Bird Hamilton. (Uncertainty over his name appears again in an 1899 letter from Lizzie to sister Mary in Box 1, Folder 18 in which she suggests his middle name was "Grey.") Writing to brothers Henry and Tolbert from Huntsville, Texas, Alexander reports on his journey there, his farm and mill work with cousin Benjamin Perry, and his interest in courting the many young women that he admires.

Box 2, Folder 1 contains letters of Patience Cook (Perry) Smith, a sister of Lizzie Hamilton's mother Emily (Perry) Hamilton. Writing to Emily from Sherman, Texas in 1856, she asks about family in Tennessee, especially her daughter Paulona, referring to Paulona's distress at the death of Patience's husband; she also refers to the some of the family's enslaved workers. After the Civil War, she laments the extra work forced upon their brother Burrell Perry

and his family after the emancipation of their slaves, and gives news of other Perry and Smith family members. A few years before her death, suffering from eyesight and hearing loss, she writes to Lizzie with additional family news.

Box 2, Folder 2 contains letters of Charity (Perry) Clements, a sister of Lizzie Hamilton's mother Emily (Perry) Hamilton. From Olive Branch, Mississippi, she writes to Emily and daughters Lizzie and Mary with news of her health, family and crop conditions. She also describes attending the festivities in Memphis, Tennessee celebrating the completion of the first railroad linking the Atlantic and the Mississippi River in 1857.

Box 2, Folder 3 contains letters to Lizzie Hamilton from her cousin Absalom Gleaves Perry, the son of her mother's brother Burrell Perry. Writing from Olive Branch, Mississippi, he reports on the whereabouts (and often the appearance and weight) of his siblings and cousins in Texas and elsewhere, his children, and other friends and family members of whom he has knowledge. He also reports on his farm production and on agricultural and economic conditions in Mississippi. The ex-Confederate soldier and prisoner of war describes the family's ire when his sister, Leona, marries a Union veteran from Michigan. He also speaks negatively about electoral gains for African Americans in 1873, and the prevalence of African-American farmers in the bottomlands of the Mississippi River.

Box 2, Folder 4 contains two items of correspondence of the McCurdy family of North Carolina, whose relationship to the Hamilton family is unknown: a letter to his brother from Archibald McCurdy, written during his travels in the South, and a letter to two McCurdy women from William Linker during his Civil War service telling of his involvement in two battles and the wounding of three men from his county.

Box 2, Folder 5 contains miscellaneous Hamilton family correspondence. A few of the correspondents cannot be precisely identified. Also included is a photograph of an unidentified male.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	Hamilton Family Collection	1856-1902	249 items
Folder 1	Inventory and genealogical notes		2 items
Folder 2	John Hall Hamilton – Letters	1856-1860	2 items
Folder 3	Joseph Porter Hamilton – Correspondence	1857-1902	46 items
Folder 4	David Dickerson Hamilton – Correspondence	1867-1896	2 items
Folder 5	Tolbert Fanning Hamilton – Correspondence	1873-1898	6 items
Folder 6	Henry Clay Hamilton – Correspondence	1884-1900	4 items
Folder 7	May (Hamilton) Baker – Correspondence	1882-1900	14 items
Folder 8	Bird (Hamilton) Calvert – Letters	1885-1898	7 items

Folder 9	Catherine “Kate” Hamilton – Letters	1891-1898	4 items
Folder 10	Margaret “Mag” (Hamilton) Trice – Correspondence	1893-1900	13 items
Folder 11	Mary Esther (Hamilton) Neal – Letters	1871-1899	17 items
Folder 12	Thomas B. Neal – Correspondence	1873-1894	3 items
Folder 13	Yandell Hamilton Neal – Correspondence	1874-1899	18 items
Folder 14	Laura Lee (Hamilton) Flake – Correspondence	1873-1891	15 items
Folder 15	Laura Lee (Hamilton) Flake – Correspondence	1892-1899	11 items
Folder 16	Edwin Cabler Hamilton – Correspondence	1883-1887	27 items
Folder 17	Edwin Cabler Hamilton – Correspondence	1888-1894	22 items
Folder 18	Temperance Elizabeth “Lizzie” Hamilton – Correspondence	1873-1902	30 items
Folder 19	Sarah (Buckner) Hamilton Jackson – Correspondence	1873-1898	3 items
Folder 20	Alexander Bird Hamilton – Letters	1860-1861	3 items
BOX 2	Hamilton Family Collection	1852-1902	42 items
Folder 1	Patience Cook (Perry) Smith – Letters	1856-1886	7 items
Folder 2	Charity (Perry) Clements – Letters	1857-1880	7 items
Folder 3	Absolem Gleaves Perry – Letters	1860-1902	14 items
Folder 4	McCurdy family – Correspondence	1852-1862	2 items
Folder 5	Miscellaneous correspondence	1859-1899	12 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS HAMILTON Family Collection 1852-1902
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Correspondence of the family of Eleazer and Emily (Perry) Hamilton of Middle Tennessee, and related families in Texas and Mississippi.

1½ boxes. 25 folders. 291 items. Originals, photograph.

2008.1.63

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 Blake, Emily A. (Hamilton), 1872-1924 – Letter to B1,F15
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 Hamilton, Dan Porter, 1879-1951 – Relating to B1,F3
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SEE or SEE ALSO

Hamilton, A. C., 1837-1861
 See
 Hamilton, Alexander Bird

 Hamilton, Bird, 1873-1899
 See
 Calvert, Bird (Hamilton)

Hamilton, Kate, 1875?-1963

See

Hamilton, Catherine Leigh

Hamilton, Laura Lee, 1864-1950

See

Flake, Laura Lee (Hamilton)

Hamilton, Lizzie, 1834-1907

See

Hamilton, Temperance Elizabeth

Hamilton, Margaret "Mag," 1877-1954

See

Trice, Margaret "Mag" (Hamilton)

Hamilton, Mary Esther, 1832?-1900

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Neal, Mary Esther (Hamilton)

Hamilton, May, 1870-1964

See

Baker, May (Hamilton)

Hamilton, Sarah Elizabeth (Buckner), 1834-1902

See

Jackson, Sarah Elizabeth (Buckner) Hamilton

McMinnville Female College – McMinnville, Tennessee

See

Cumberland Female College

Niedermeier 07/27/2020