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Taylor Family Letters (MSS 730)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
Department of Library Special Collections
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

Descriptive Inventory

MSS 730 TAYLOR Family Letters

½ box. 5 folders. 28 items. 1918-1921. Originals.

SC2021.62.1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Born in Bowling Green, Kentucky on 1 March 1855, Carrie Burnam studied at Cedar Bluff College in Woodburn. After graduating in 1877, she started a small dressmaking business in her family home. In 1879, she married Aaron H. Taylor, and the following year moved her business to a commercial location in Bowling Green. By 1902, the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company occupied a large building on State Street and had grown to become one of the most successful businesses in Kentucky. Employing as many as 300 seamstresses, Taylor maintained an extensive mail-order clientele, kept offices in New York and London, and regularly traveled to Europe to purchase fabrics and trim for her designs. Carrie Burnam Taylor ran her dressmaking firm until her death on 24 November 1917. The firm closed its doors in 1930.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection consists of letters of Aaron H. Taylor and William B. Taylor, Carrie Taylor's husband and son respectively. Some are misdated or undated, but all appear to have been written in the four-year period after Carrie Taylor's death on 24 November 1917. The letters are to Carrie Taylor's daughter Louise (Taylor) Beckwith and her husband Herbert Beckwith, then living in Pasadena, California. Also included is financial information prepared for Louise Beckwith concerning her mother's estate and her dressmaking firm, the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company.

William B. Taylor's letters to his sister largely concern financial matters in the aftermath of their mother's death. "Will" discusses the division and maintenance of assets (which include the family homestead, property in Venice, California and other rental properties, warrants, and stock in The Citizens National Bank of Bowling Green) as well as investments, expenses, and the business prospects of the company. He is attentive to Louise's interests and provides her with financial statements, but notes the challenges facing the company, especially in the uncertain economic climate of World War I. He nevertheless hopes to obtain some government contracts and believes he can build up the business with his father's counsel and advice. On the subject of fashion, he asks Louise to tell him when her young son Burnam is "ready for his first long

suit”; for Louise, he offers several suggestions including “a white serge coat suit,” suitable for year-round wear in Pasadena at a tea, church or “dress up afternoon affair.”

In a letter to Louise’s husband Herbert, Will contemplates purchasing his father’s interest in the business but fears “its passing to other hands in case of my death.” Indeed, Will appears to have suffered from poor health: the collection includes a resolution of the Board of Directors of The Citizens National Bank following his untimely death on 4 May 1920.

With one exception, Aaron H. Taylor’s letters to his daughter are written after Will’s death. He too discusses the financial affairs of his late wife’s company, particularly its stockholdings in The Citizens National Bank of Bowling Green. He writes of his wish to keep the business going but also of the possibility of selling, and of the departure of some employees due to his attempts to reduce wages. Of interest is an undertaking signed by Taylor and by company manager Nathalie Baldy agreeing not to employ or do business with Louise’s now-widowed sister-in-law, Louise (Matlock) Taylor, or two other Matlock family members as long as Louise Beckwith holds an interest in the company. Aaron Taylor comments on the necessity of maintaining a work volume to meet the payroll of 110 women; Miss Baldy, he observes, needs encouragement in “getting the work out promptly” and is “over anxious to have the dresses pretty.” He also reports on the disposition of a seal coat and mink coat of his late wife’s, subject to taxation under a new law affecting cold storage facilities.

A few of the letters use letterhead designed to facilitate the mail-order business of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company. Along the left margin are instructions to customers explaining pricing, samples, substitutions and measurements, including any special requirements for orders of mourning garments.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	Taylor Family Letters	1918-1921	28 items
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	William B. Taylor letters to Louise (Taylor) Beckwith and Herbert Beckwith	1918-1919, n.d.	12 items
Folder 3	Resolution of Citizens National Bank Board of Directors on death of William B. Taylor	1920	1 item
Folder 4	Aaron H. Taylor letters to Louise (Taylor) Beckwith	1918-1921	8 items
Folder 5	Financial statements	1918-1920, n.d.	6 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS TAYLOR Family Letters 1918-1921
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Letters of Aaron H. Taylor and William B. Taylor, husband and son of Carrie Burnam Taylor of Bowling Green Kentucky, written to her daughter after her death regarding her estate and the affairs of Taylor's large dressmaking business, the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company.

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SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Baldy, Mary Nathalie, 1866-1955 – Relating to
Beckwith, Herbert Henry, 1858-1948 – Letters to
Beckwith, Louise Rice (Taylor), 1882-1959 – Letters to
Bowling Green – Businesses – Dressmaking
Citizens National Bank of Bowling Green – Relating to
Matlock, Elizabeth H. (Valentine), 1858-1951 – Relating to
Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company – Bowling Green – Relating to
Roblee, Elsie Valentine (Matlock), 1885-1955 – Relating to
Rodes family – Mentioned
Taylor, Aaron H., 1854-1940
Taylor, Carrie (Burnam), 1855-1917 – Relating to
Taylor, Louise Cunningham (Matlock), 1889-1959 – Relating to
Taylor, William Burnam, 1880-1920
World War I, 1914-1918 – New York City – Comments about, 1918

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