

**BOYD, NANNIE SEAWELL, COLLECTION
OF PAPERS
RELATING TO
MONTGOMERY BELL,
1853-1939**

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Archives and Manuscripts Unit
Technical Services Section
Tennessee State Library and Archives

Accession Number 29
Date Completed: 1962
Finding Aid Updated: March 1, 1996
Location: I-A-2
Library of Congress Card Number: MS 64-1175

INTRODUCTION

This collection of papers relating to Montgomery Bell were collected and donated to the Tennessee State Library and Archives by Mrs. Nannie (Seawell) Boyd (Mrs. Isaac Boyd) of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1939. The papers consist of approximately 100 items on .42 linear feet of shelf space.

Literary rights to the unpublished writings in the papers have been dedicated to the public. Single photocopies of the unpublished writings may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection of papers relating to Montgomery Bell, consisting of approximately 100 items, were collected by Mrs. Isaac (Nannie Seawell) Boyd, and donated to the Manuscript Division of the Tennessee State Library and Archives. The papers include some biographical data relating to Montgomery Bell's family; several newspaper clippings; about 44 letters concerning Bell's life obtained from a number of prominent individuals; a sketch of Montgomery Bell Academy by Judge Robert Ewing; some brief sketches and notes written by Mrs. Boyd; some documents relating to Bell's colonization project in Liberia; and Bell's Will and papers dealing with his estate. A few photographs and memorabilia make up the balance of the collection.

Mrs. Boyd's correspondence received includes such individuals as Judge John H. Dewitt; W. B. Leech; Robert Ewing; Mrs. John Trotwood Moore; Park Marshall, of Franklin; Andrew M. Sea, of Louisville, Kentucky; C. G. Woodson, Director of the *Journal of Negro History*; Patterson Bain, a descendant of Montgomery Bell's sister, Christine Sadler, and others.

Bell's most outstanding accomplishment was the establishment of about 14 iron furnaces throughout Middle Tennessee. In one instance he had a tunnel cut through solid rock to bring water power to the furnace. In 1853 and 1854 Bell sent two groups (about 100 individuals) of his slaves to Liberia, Africa. He provisioned them for six months, and in the case of one group he arranged for them to obtain ore land in Liberia to set up a furnace.

In his Will, Bell stipulated that his remaining slave families not be separated when sold. He named William E. Watkins, John Roberts, and his nephew, James Bell, executors of his estate. After donations of \$20,000 to Montgomery Bell Academy, and \$1,000 to John M. Hill and Dr. John Edgar for payment of debts due by the Presbyterian Church in Nashville, the remainder of his estate was to be divided into eight parts and distributed to the heirs of his brothers and sisters. Court records of Dickson County, Tennessee, show that many law suits were filed against Bell for debts unpaid, even for amounts under ten dollars. W. B. Leech, who was a descendent of a sister of Bell's, wrote Mrs. Boyd that his father said that Bell never paid a debt until he was sued.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Montgomery Bell

- 1769, Jan. 3 Born in Fallowfield Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania. Youngest of 10 children born to John and Mary Pattison Bell.
- 1794 General Robertson established Cumberland Furnace.
- 1800 Bell moved to Tennessee from Kentucky.
- 1802 Bell bought Cumberland Furnace from General Robertson. Beginning his career as an iron manufacturer. He had a contract with the United States Government to make cannon balls and he made the cannon balls used at New Orleans in his furnace.
- 1804 Bell was made Justice of the Peace and helped organize Dickson County.
- 1804 Bought the Old Yellow Creek Furnace.
- 1814 Built the Old Jones Creek Furnace.
- 1816 Purchased the Duck River Ore Bank for \$14,000
- 1818 Began the improvement of the Narrows of Harpeth which was one of his greatest undertakings.
- 1820 Constructed the famous tunnels at the Narrows of Harpeth, which turned the river to furnish the water power needed to keep his iron hammers going. Patterson Iron Works was the name of this furnace.
- 1823 Purchased the Mother Ore bank for \$10,000.
- 1824 Bellview Furnace was build.
- 1829 Build Valley Forge Furnace.
- 1830 Build Jackson Furnace, the largest in the state.
- 1844 Build Whorley Furnace which was his last. It is said that altogether he built 14 furnaces. Steam power was first used at the Whorley Furnace which was named for James Whorley his first and favorite slave.

1853 Sent two groups (about 100) of slaves to Liberia, Africa, and provided them with enough money to support them for six months. They were all iron laborers. In the case of the second group, he helped them obtain iron lands in Liberia and get a furnace established there.

1855 Died April 1, and was buried at the Narrows. The fund of \$20,000 given in his Will to Montgomery Bell Academy was well invested, and at the end of the Civil War it had increased to \$50,000. His Will specified that it was to be used for the education of 25 boys, 10 of whom were to be chosen from Davidson County, five from Williamson, five from Dickson, and five from Montgomery.

**NANNIE SEAWELL BOYD COLLECTION
RELATING TO MONTGOMERY BELL**

Container List

Box 1:

Folder 1. - Biographical data.

Folder 2. - Clippings.

Folder 3. - Correspondence, 1926-1939, contents:

1926

1. Jan. 14, 1926, Mrs. I. S. Boyd, New York, to Mrs. John Trotwood Moore.
2. Mar. 2, 1926, Mrs. I. S. Boyd, New York, to Mrs. John Trotwood Moore.
3. Mar 2, 1926, Robert Ewing, Nashville, TN, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
4. Mar 19, 1926, Park Marshall, Franklin, TN, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
5. Mar. 22, 1926, Andrew M. Sea, Jr., Louisville, KY, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
6. Apr. 23, 1926, Director, Nashville, TN, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
7. Oct. 28, 1926, Robert Ewing to Dr. James I. Vance.
8. Nov. 1, 1926, Robert Ewing to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
9. Nov. 4, 1926, John H. DeWitt, Nashville, TN, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.

1927-1929

10. Mar. 28, 1927, John H. DeWitt, Nashville, TN, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
11. Nov. 30, 1927, C. G. Woodson, Washington, D. C., to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
12. Dec. 10, 1927, John H. DeWitt to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
13. Aug. 20, 1928, Emma W. Hogan, San Diego, CA, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
14. Oct. 29, 1928, L. G. Caton, Library of Congress, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
15. Apr. 24, 1929, John H. DeWitt, Nashville TN, to Hon. W. B. Leech.

1931

16. Feb. 26, 1931, Florence Spoffard (researcher), Washington, D. C. to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
17. Apr. 12, 1931, Andrew M. Sea, Jr., Louisville, KY, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
18. Apr. 24, 1931, Theodore R. McKeldem, Baltimore, MD, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
19. Apr. 28, 1931, Patterson Bain, St. Louis, MO, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
20. Jul. 9, 1931, W. H. Jordan, Charlotte, TN, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.

1932-1936

21. May 27, 1932, Christine Sadler, *Nashville Banner*, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
22. Apr. 10, 1934, Rebecca Johnston, Richmond, VA, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
23. Feb. 14, 1935, Patterson Bain, St. Louis, MO, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
24. ca. 1935, Robert Woods Miller to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
25. Jan. 29, 1936, Park Marshall, Franklin, TN, to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.

1937

26. Apr. 16, 1937, Bob (?) to Mrs. I. S. Boyd.
27. Apr. 16, 1937, Bob (?) to Lallie (?) with enclosures, Apr. 15, 1937 and Apr. 13, 1937, Robert P. Tulloss to Mrs. R. H. Bransford.

1938-1939*

28. Sep. 16, 1938, Mrs. I. S. Boyd to Mrs. John Trotwood Moore.
 29. Sep. 30, 1938, Mrs. I. S. Boyd to Mrs. John Trotwood Moore.
 30. Nov. 7, 1938, Mrs. I. S. Boyd to Mrs. John Trotwood Moore.
 31. Dec. 1938, Mrs. I. S. Boyd to Mrs. John Trotwood Moore.
 32. Jan. 26, 1939, Mrs. I. S. Boyd to Mrs. John Trotwood Moore.
- * These letters are found in the Nannie Sewell Boyd Collection Accession Folder.

Folder 4. - Correspondence, letters from W. B. Leech to I. S. Boyd, 1926-1935,

1. Nov. 8, 1926.
2. Nov. 30, 1926.
3. Jul. 9, 1928.
4. Aug. 2, 1928.
5. Sep. 1, 1928.
6. Nov. 20, 1928.
7. Apr. 24, 1929 -- John H. DeWitt to Hon. W. B. Leech re: Naming of bridge for Montgomery Bell. Note from Leech to Mrs. Boyd on letter.
8. Mar. 27, 1930.
9. Mar. 30, 1931.
10. May 28, 1931.
11. Jun. 3, 1931.

Folder 5. - Montgomery Bell Academy: A history by Judge Robert Ewing.

Folder 6. - Photos and memorabilia.

Folder 7. - Sketches about Montgomery Bell by Mrs. Isaac (Nannie Seawell) Boyd.

Folder 8. - Liberia Project - two groups of slaves sent by Bell to Liberia in 1853 and 1854.

Folder 9. - Will and papers relating to the estate of Montgomery Bell.