

**BETTY FAMILY
PAPERS
1835 –1935**

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INTRODUCTION

The Betty Family Papers, covering the years 1835 through 1935, were given to the Manuscript Section by Mr. Bernard Betty, Nashville Tennessee. The linear feet of shelf space occupied is .42 and the approximate number of items is 80. Single photocopies of these papers may be made for purposes of scholarly research but reproduction on a large scale is restricted.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Betty Family Papers, of Rutherford County, Tennessee, 1835–1935 consist of correspondence, three loose documents, genealogical data, photographs, and sketches. Included in the correspondence are letters from William Francis McClanahan Betty (ca. 1829-1902/03) to his wife, Sophie Burrus (Rucker) Betty (1839-1866), before and after they married in 1859. William Betty served as Lieutenant in the 28th Tennessee, C.S.A., from 1862 to 1865. There are seven letters from Betty to his wife expressing his love and how much he misses his family between 1864-65. His younger daughter, Willie, was born after he left for service. She became an internationally acclaimed artist and had a studio in Paris, France, and later in Nashville, Tennessee, where she died in 1935. (She was born January 21, 1863; married J. W. Newman in 1882, and to this day is referred to as Willie Betty Newman.) In his letters, Lieutenant Betty shows concern for his two little daughters and writes, "Train little Josie and Willie in the way they should go - do not spoil them." He wrote very little about the war conditions. From near Atlanta, June 17, 1864, he wrote, "We have had quite an arduous campaign and it is not closed yet. I spent quite a nice time in camp last winter - I had candles at night and read a great deal of history ... I am now reading the bible regularly through." He was wounded and writes from Griffin, Georgia, July 31, 1864, of the three-inch deep wound in his neck and the kindness of the ladies of Griffin to him. Also he writes, "I have seen enough of horror, of death and terror,...I have heard the groans of many noble and brave boys ... I have seen enough ... I would now that Peace would once more bless this People and that law and order would once more govern this distracted country Yet I see no kind of prospect of Peace ... and the North and the South like the Kilkenny cats will continue to fight until each government is literally ruined and destroyed" Sophie's letters to her husband contain information about the children and may provide insight into Willie's childhood development. Other family member's letters are also in the papers. One such letter from James K. Betty while in Rock Island Prison, Illinois to William states that "the men are very well cared for here and we have good nice hospitals and beds, all kept in order." Some of the letters in this collection bear Confederate stamps, some United States stamps, and most of them have "By Flag of Truce" written across the face of the envelope.

The photographs include one of "Maple Grove" (later known as "The Betty Place") in Rutherford County, Tennessee, built by Benjamin Rucker in 1832, Willie (Betty) Newman, approximately 64 years of age, and an interior scene at 219 Russell Street, Nashville, that shows the portrait of Benjamin Rucker painted by Ralph Earl. Also included is an inventory of Willie (Betty) Newman's paintings, 1933-34. There is a newspaper clipping with picture and story of Willie (Betty) Newman from 1909. The papers also contain some genealogical data on the Rucker, Betty, and Breast families.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

William Francis McClanahan Betty

- ca. 1829 Born in Rutherford County, Tennessee
- 1859 October 12, married Sophie Burrus Rucker, daughter of Benjamin Rucker of Maple Grove, near Murfreesboro, Tennessee
- 1860 Daughter Josephine born (married James K. Neil)
- 1863 January 21 daughter Willie born (married JW Newman)
- 1862-65 Served as Lt., 28th Tennessee, CSA
- 1866 Sophie Burrus Rucker Betty died
- ? Married Laura Miller of Murfreesboro
- 1902/03 Died at Lebanon

Willie (Betty) Newman

- 1863 January 21 born near Murfreesboro in Maple Grove, home of her grandfather, Benjamin Rucker, built in 1832
- 1866 Sophie Burrus Rucker Betty (mother) died
- 1882 Married JW Newman and had a son , William Gold Newman
- 1889 Entered Cincinnati Academy of Art
- 1891 Entered Julian Academy in Paris, France and studied under Benjamin Constant
- 1901 Returned to Tennessee and opened the Newman School of Art in Nashville.
- 1935 Died in Nashville

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

1. Correspondence, Betty , Sophie (Rucker) - 1858-1860
2. Correspondence, Betty , Sophie (Rucker) - 1864-1865
3. Correspondence, Betty , William Francis McClanahan, 1858
4. Correspondence, Betty , William Francis McClanahan, 1864
5. Correspondence, Humphries, Lula K., 1866
6. Correspondence, Neill, Josephine (Rucker) - 1860, 1864
7. Correspondence, Miscellaneous - 1860-1935
8. Correspondence, Rucker, Benjamin - 1835
9. Documents
10. Genealogical data
11. Obituary
12. Photographs
13. Sketches-Biographical
14. Sketches-Places