



State of Tennessee  
Department of State  
**Tennessee State Library and Archives**  
403 Seventh Avenue North  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

**ABERNATHY, THOMAS EDWARD**  
**(1794-1870)**  
**PAPERS, 1787-1882**

*Processed by:*

B. M. A.

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## INTRODUCTION

The papers of Thomas Edward Abernathy, 1794-1870, Justice of the Peace and Land Agent in Giles County, Tennessee, were acquired partially by purchase from Mrs. Martha (Rivers) Adams and partially as a gift of Mrs. Adams to the Tennessee State Library and Archives on November 8, 1938. An addition was acquired by transfer from the Jones Memorial Library in Lynchburg, Va., in 2016.

The papers occupy .42 linear feet of shelf space, and contain approximately 83 items and one volume. Literary rights in these papers have been dedicated to the public. Single photocopies of unpublished writings may be made for purposes of scholarly or individual research.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers of Thomas Edward Abernathy, covering the period 1787-1882 and numbering approximately 67 items, contain accounts (bills, notes, receipts), correspondence, diaries, instructions for the mill, legal documents (including agreements and indentures), information on the Columbia, Pulaski, Elkton, Tennessee, and the Alabama Turnpike Company, and the will of Richard Scott. The bulk of the material falls within the years 1830-1870 during which time Thomas Abernathy was Justice of the Peace in Giles County, Tennessee, and Land Agent for several persons not living in that county. The earliest date found in the collection is 1787 and is a receipt for a business transaction. There are two short diaries in this collection, one dated 1826 containing a few entries that should be of some help to researchers seeking genealogical information. The other diary contains a few entries for the years 1833-1836, primarily concerning Abernathy's religious life. Also, included are instructions for the repair and upkeep of Old Brown Mill, legal documents which include agreements and indentures, a will drawn up for Richard Scott in 1808, and a few miscellaneous items.

The largest portion of the material in the collection is accounts and correspondence. The correspondence is all incoming, with the largest number of letters from A. W. Taylor (1847-1848) and M. S. Temple (1835-1842). Both groups of letters are concerned with land sales and purchases. Other letters are from relatives and Lucy Ann Pully, for whom Abernathy was guardian.

In May 2016, an addition of 7 items was received from the Jones Memorial Library in Lynchburg, Va. The addition includes the following items, filed chronologically: a subscription list to purchase school books for the Sunday School at Beech Grove Meeting House, undated but possibly 1830s (the first signer is Thos. Abernathy, \$2.00); an account for Elkton Female Academy, 1835-1836, sent to Abernathy for collection by L. Garrett; a letter to Abernathy from Robert Paine, La Grange College, Alabama, Dec. 2, 1841, when Paine was president of this college, regarding differences between Episcopalians and Methodists, a revival recently held at the college, damage to cotton crops, and an upcoming trip they planned to make together to Mississippi and the Memphis, Tenn. area; a receipt for \$20 tuition and tax for the Tennessee Female Institute, 1844, to Thomas E. Abernathy; a letter to Abernathy from Robert Paine in Aberdeen, Miss., June 6, 1848, regarding primarily family and community news but also

mentioning the split of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Paine's feelings about it, and containing within a letter from Paine's wife to Abernathy's wife; a letter of M.P. Wendel (Paine's daughter) to "Cousin Mary," [no month] 21<sup>st</sup>, 1882; a typescript, undated and unattributed, 3 pages, regarding the split of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Bishop Paine's role in it as well as quotes from letters Paine wrote to his sister, Martha Paine Rivers.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

### **Thomas Edward Abernathy**

- 1794 Born in Mecklenburg County, Virginia.
- n. d. Married Martha Moore, who died in 1835
- n. d. Married Martha (Paine) Rivers, a widow
- ca. 1830-1870 Justice of the Peace and Land Agent in Giles County, Tennessee
- 1870 Died

## CONTAINER LIST

### **Box 1**

1. Accounts -- undated
2. Accounts -- 1787-1796
3. Accounts -- 1800-1832
4. Accounts -- 1833-1838
5. Accounts -- 1839-1845
6. Accounts -- 1846-1855
7. Accounts -- 1856-1876
8. Accounts -- 1882
9. Church and Richland Missionary Society Appointments -- Undated
10. Correspondence, Incoming -- Abernathy-Moore, 1836-1853
11. Correspondence, Incoming -- Neblett-Redgway, 1822-1848
12. Correspondence, Incoming -- Taylor, A.W., 1847-1848
13. Correspondence, Incoming -- Temple, M.S., 1835-1842
14. Correspondence, Incoming -- Terry-White, 1846-1853
15. Diary -- Thomas E. Abernathy
16. Instructions for Mill, 1851
17. Legal Documents -- Agreements, etc., 1815-1865
18. Legal Documents -- Indentures, 1819-1869
19. Miscellaneous items
20. Turnpike Company Records -- Columbia, Pulaski, Elkton, and Alabama Turnpike Company, 1841-1842
21. Wills -- Scott, Richard, 1808
22. Addition (7 items), 1836-1882 and undated - NOT ON MICROFILM