



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives

Tarpley Family Diaries and Accounts,
1855-1898

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:

Tarpley, Edward Dudley (1833-1894)
Tarpley, Thomas A. (1877-1901)

Inclusive Dates:

1855-1867, 1896-1898

Scope & Content:

One volume containing the personal observations of two Bedford County men, father and son. Edward Tarpley opens the journal with a short autobiography. The first entry Edward made in October 1855 is an account of his journey to the Kansas Territory. Thomas Tarpley began recording his own comments thirty years after his father's last entry.

Edward returned home from the Kansas Territory in November 1855. He worked on the family's Bedford County farm and attended a writing school. Except for two extended journeys, Edward remained in Bedford County until 1860. From November 1856 to March 1857, he worked in Mississippi building a cotton gin. He also spent April and May 1858 visiting relatives in West Tennessee.

On March 6, 1860, Tarpley departed on a wandering journey to Texas, traveling down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. From there, he traveled north by boat to Jefferson City, Texas. Throughout the spring and summer, he trekked by steer wagon and stagecoach to Texas, stopping along the way to visit friends and family. Tarpley mentions Dallas, Waco, Austin, Gonzales, and Seguin, Texas. After staying a week with his cousin Sturlin Tarpley in Danville, he traveled to Lockhart on the San Marcos River. He began working for Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Shaw, building a mill, gin house, and shed. The Shaws kept Tarpley on as an overseer. It is unknown whether Tarpley was a slave overseer, but a Sarah A.

Shaw of Lockhart (Caldwell, County), Texas, appeared in the 1860 federal census as owning 34 slaves.

Edward's diary entry for December 16, 1862, records that he was exempted from Confederate conscription because of his job. In 1863, he worked for John Josey as a millwright until he was drafted by state troops in September. After two weeks in Indianola, Texas, Tarpley was "put aboard the rebel ram John F. Carr" in Matagorda Bay for the winter. In February 1864, he reported to Gonzales, Texas. During a 30-day furlough, Tarpley went to Austin, Texas, to get a detail as a miller. He remained at the mill until he was ordered to join a company or be conscripted again in July. Instead, Edward departed for Mexico on July 16, 1864, traveling by way of San Antonio. He spent time in Matamoros and Bagdad, Mexico, describing the towns, his work, and his adventures on the road.

Tarpley returned to Texas on March 25, 1865, and saw for "the first time in three years those proud old stars and stripes." He took the oath of allegiance to the United States and decided to return to Tennessee. When he arrived in New Orleans on April 22, 1865, he wrote that the city was draped in black for President Lincoln. (The president had been murdered just a week before.) Tarpley sailed to Memphis, Tennessee, and arrived just after the horrific explosion of the SS Sultana. "There was 22 hundred passengers aboard mostly paroled federal soldiers 14 hundred lives lost the boat caught fire and floated just passed the city and sunk the stream was gorged with dead bodies." [Spacing is Tarpley's.] The Sultana disaster remains the worst maritime tragedy in U. S. history.

Upon his return to Bedford County, Edward visited friends and relatives and corresponded with friends in Texas. He returned to Texas in October 1866, and to Gonzales in December. The following spring, Tarpley went home and found his father unwell. Edward's last journal entry, dated December 31, 1867, describes a terrible winter storm that destroyed the orchard with the heaviest sleet that he had ever seen.

Edward's son, Thomas A. Tarpley, used the diary between March 1, 1896, and April 3, 1898. He wrote of daily life and work on the family farm, visits with family and friends, and the numerous church services that he attended.

The final pages are in Edward Tarpley's hand. He recorded household expenses between 1886 and 1891, business expenses incurred from 1871 to 1893, and weather conditions from 1890 to 1894. The last two pages contain a record of the distances that he traveled in 1866.

Note: The Tennessee State Library and Archives has a privately published copy of *The Diary of Edward Dudley Tarpley, 1855-1867*. The booklet was printed for the family. This transcription includes information about the family and was filmed along with the journal.

Physical Description/Extent:

1 microfilm reel, 16mm

Accession/Record Group Number:

Mf. 1906

Language:

English

Permanent Location:

Available on microfilm only

Repository:

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

Administrative/Biographical History

The son of Edward and Mary Tarpley, Edward Dudley Tarpley was born September 21, 1833, in Rutherford County, Tennessee. The family moved to a farm in northwestern Bedford County the following year. Edward worked on the family farm and as a dry goods clerk for his brother-in-law J. A. Gannaway in Wartrace, and attended school "at leisure seasons." After suffering a severe case of typhoid fever, Tarpley traveled to the Kansas Territory in 1855, supporting himself by working as a miller. After the travels he described in his diary, Tarpley returned to Bedford County. In 1868, he married Alice Bivins, the daughter of Silas and Lucy Gannaway Bivins. Tarpley operated Clary's Mill on the Duck River. Edward died on July 20, 1894, of apoplexy after the mill was destroyed by arson.

Thomas A. Tarpley was born October 3, 1877, in Bedford County, Tennessee. He died on October 30, 1901, at age 24.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

Diaries are chronological. Accounts follow.

Conditions of Access and Use**Restrictions on Access:**

None

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:

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Index Terms**Personal Names:**

Tarpley, Edward Dudley, 1833-1894
Tarpley, Thomas A., 1877-1901

Subjects:

Agriculture -- Tennessee
Mills and mill-work
Sultana (Steamboat)

Geographic Names:

Longview (Tenn.) -- History
Bedford County (Tenn.) -- History
Texas -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources
United States -- Description and travel

Document Types:

Diaries

Acquisition and Appraisal**Provenance and Acquisition:**

The diary was loaned for microfilming on October 3, 2012, during the Looking Back: The Civil War in Tennessee digitization project in Shelbyville, Tennessee.

Processing and Administrative Information**Preferred Citation:**

Tarpley Family Diaries and Accounts, 1855-1898, Tennessee State Library and Archives

Processing Information:

Processing was completed by Genny Carter in March 2013.

Existence and Location of Originals:

Privately owned

Electronic Location and Access:

<http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/mf1906.pdf>

DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Volume
Diary -- Edward Dudley Tarpley	1855-1867	1
Diary -- Thomas A. Tarpley	1896-1898	1
Accounts -- Edward Dudley Tarpley	1866-1894	1