



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

**BACON, MATTIE L. (OLDHAM)  
PAPERS, 1870-1897**

**(THS Collection)**

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## INTRODUCTION

This finding aid covers the personal papers of Mattie L. Bacon (Oldham), who lived for most of her adult life in Lauderdale County, Tennessee. The papers include correspondence to family members, primarily to one sister, a scrapbook composed mostly of literary clippings, a land survey, a photograph of her husband, Edward R. Oldham, who served under General Bedford Forrest, and two advertisements from her sister, Mrs. Rosa Lea.

Ms. Bacon's papers cover the period from 1870 to 1997, that have several gaps in the dates, with most of the papers dated after her marriage to Edward R. Oldham, on December 6, 1876. The letters make up the majority of her papers, and they deal mostly with family matters with some brief discussions about education and politics.

The papers are a Tennessee Historical Society collection, and were donated by Ms. Lea L. Oldham in 1992. The collection measures .5 linear feet (one box), and there are no restrictions on the use of the collection.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mattie L. Bacon lived in Fulton, Lauderdale County, Tennessee, with her family, and siblings, Rosa, Albert, Will, Ella, Buddie, Jimmie, Cora, and Peter, and their spouses. She married Edward R. Oldham on December 6, 1876. After the wedding, Mattie moved to Ripley, Tennessee, also in Lauderdale County. She had four children, Edward L., Thomas, James, and Rosa Lea. Mattie preceded her husband in death though the exact date is unknown, and he remarried prior to his death in 1932.

Mattie wrote poetry for several publications including the *Ladies Home Journal* and *Youth's Companion*. She taught school, mainly at the "free-school" that met on the family farm, "Forest Home."

\*Sources: Obituary, Edward R. Oldham, *The Nashville Banner*, February 8, 1932; and "Historic Farm Goes on Auction Block June One," *Dyersburg Gazette*, May 27, 1968.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Mattie L. Bacon (Oldham) Papers, 1870-1897, document mostly her married life and interaction with her extended family. The papers include correspondence to family members, primarily to one sister, a scrapbook composed mostly of literary clippings, a land survey, a photograph of her husband, Edward R. Oldham. Some of the correspondence in the collection was created by other family members including one letter from her husband, and several letters from her children to their aunts, Ella and Rosa. There are, however, within the letters a few references to broader topics such as education and politics.

The materials are arranged by hierarchically, then chronologically, with the correspondence divided based on creator, date known (1870-1878, 1880-1897), and then by date unknown, and then where there are only letter fragments. Within the correspondence there are multiple gaps in date with only one letter from 1870 and then starting again in December 1876. The letters continue throughout 1877 and 1878, but there are no letters for 1879. It is not clear the exact reason for the gap, but in 1879 fire destroyed the family mansion on "Forest Home" farm in Ripley, Tennessee. There are two other main periods of correspondence dating from 1880-1883 and 1892-1897.

The correspondence included in the collection deals mostly with family matters concerning Mattie's children and siblings. In this collection, she primarily writes to one sister, Rosa. She mostly writes about general information such as health concerns and family activities. There is some discussion about education, particularly about the "free-school" on the family property and her role as a teacher. She discusses education in letters to her sisters, Rosa and Ella, who also taught.

Other letters included in the collection are from Mattie's husband, Edward R. Oldham, and her children. These correspondences cover much of the information in Mattie's papers, and the inclusive dates are 1881-1897, with the children's letters beginning in 1892 and comprising the later dates.

The scrapbook, account ledger, photograph, land survey, and advertisements are in separate folders. The scrapbook contains mostly short stories and poetry clippings from literary magazines. There are also picture clippings, and newspaper clippings relating to activities of family or friends. The account ledger is for Edward L.'s (Mattie's eldest son) company. The photograph is a formal pose of Edward R. Oldham in his Confederate uniform. The land survey is a copy dated 1908, and is for 300 acres bought by Samuel Oldham in 1856. The survey has a written note on it from 1961 suggesting that the survey relates to the "Forest Home" farm. The first advertisement is from Mrs. Rosa Lea, who is looking for a lost map. The second advertisement is titled, "Southward We Go," and was written by Mattie's son, Tom.

## CONTAINER LIST

### **Box 1**

1. Letters--Bacon (Oldham), Mattie L., 1870-1878
2. Letters--Bacon (Oldham), Mattie L., 1880-1897
3. Letters--Other, fragments, date unknown
4. Letters--Oldham family, 1881-1897
5. Land Survey--Copy of 1856 Survey for Samuel Oldham, 1908
6. Advertisements--Lea, Rosa, 1894
7. Scrapbook--Bacon (Oldham), Mattie L.
8. Account Ledger--E. L. Oldham Co., 1896
9. Photograph--Oldham, Edward R., not dated