



William H. Wills Papers, 792 00792

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Finding aid written in English

Wilson Special Collections Library

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Summary Information

Summary Category	Description
Repository:	Wilson Special Collections Library
Creator:	Wills, William H. (William Henry), 1809-1889.
Title:	William H. Wills Papers, 1712-1993 (bulk 1803-1882)
ID:	00792
ID [aspace_uri]:	/repositories/2/resources/10757
Date [inclusive]:	1712-1993
Date [bulk]:	(bulk 1803-1882)
Physical Description:	2,000 items 3.0 linear feet
Language of the Material:	Materials in English
Abstract:	<p>The papers of William H. Wills, a white general merchant, Methodist Protestant minister, and cotton plantation owner, document the lives of the white plantation-owning Wills, Norman, Swain, Swift, Cotten, and Snell families and the people enslaved by them in Halifax County, N.C., Washington County, N.C., Edgecombe County, N.C., Jackson County, Fla., and Leon County, Fla. Known plantations include Greenwood Plantation, Spring Grove Plantation, and Strawberry Hill Plantation in Halifax County, N.C., and Cotton Land in Leon County, Fla. The collection includes correspondence and other papers documenting enslavement in North Carolina and Florida, itinerant ministers of the Methodist Protestant church in North Carolina and church administration between the 1840s and 1890s. Information appears on circuit travels, camp meetings, local churches, finances, arbitration and trials, divided opinions regarding slavery within the Methodist Protestant denomination, and local, state, district, and national church administration. Other topics include the lives of the white families; boarding school life; conflicts with the Seminole people in Florida; camp and home life during the American Civil War; and women teachers in the period following the war's end. There are also a few travel diaries documenting journeys in the antebellum South, and a diary commenting on life in Key West, Fla.; Miami, Fla.; and Tampa, Fla.</p>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the William H. Wills Papers #792, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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Biographical Note

William H. Wills (1809-1889) of Halifax County, N.C., was a white general merchant, a Methodist Protestant minister, and a cotton plantation owner. Over his long ministerial career, circa 1844-1889, Wills held many church offices, including president of the North Carolina Annual Conference, president of the General Conference, president of the District, and superannuate. He gave up merchandising in 1843 to focus on his ministerial duties and his cotton plantation in Brinkleyville, N.C. In 1835, Wills married Anna Whitaker (1817-1893), the daughter of Cary Whitaker (1782-1858), a physician and owner of a plantation (Strawberry Hill) in Enfield, N.C., and later Jackson County, Fla., and Martha Susan Baker (d. 1836).

Anna had several brothers, including Cary Whitaker (1832-1865), a student at the University of North Carolina, captain in the 43rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment, and judge advocate of Court Martial, 1864-1865; Reverend George A. T. Whitaker (fl. 1842-1882); and Lawrence B. Whitaker (d. 1864).

William and Anna had nine children, including Richard H. (1836-1891); Martha (1839-1927); George Whitaker (1842-1864); Lucy (1844-1908); Edward (1846-1900); Mary (1848-1941); Harriet (1852-1942); Cornelia (1854-1930); and Agnes (1858-1886). Richard was a Methodist Protestant minister who held several church offices, including president of the North Carolina Conference. George and Edward served in the American Civil War, George with the 43rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment and Edward with the junior reserves of the 2nd North Carolina Regiment. Edward became a cotton farmer in Brinkleyville, N.C., after the war. Mary and Lucy both taught school, Lucy briefly in 1866 and Mary from the late 1870s through at least the 1900s.

In 1864, Richard married Anna Louisa Norman (fl. 1844-1891), daughter of Joseph S. Norman (1804-1864), a cotton plantation owner in Plymouth, N.C. Norman was an avid secessionist and member of the North Carolina General Assembly. He had at least three other children: Thomas Joshua, a captain in the 17th North Carolina Infantry Regiment; Joseph S. (d. 1864) of the 17th North Carolina Infantry Regiment; and Swain Swift Norman. The Normans were closely related to the Swift and Swain families of Halifax, Tyrrell, Washington, Edgecombe, and Albemarle counties, N.C.

Other family members documented in the collection include Spencer D. Cotten (d. 1838), a commission merchant and financial agent in Tarboro, N.C., his son, John W. Cotten, who owned Cotton Land in Leon County, Fla., and Robert Snell (fl. 1816-1841), a liquor distiller in Washington County, N.C. Cotten was Anna Wills's uncle by marriage. The relation of Robert Snell to the Wills family is unclear.

Enslaved and formerly enslaved people documented in this collection include Lettice, a girl enslaved by the Cotton family; Washington Wills, who accompanied George Whitaker Wills and Edward Wills while serving in the Confederate Army; Bob Wills, a formerly enslaved man, who is mentioned in an 1874 memorandum concerning land sold to John W. Heptinstall on Wills's behalf.

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Scope and Content

Records documenting enslaved and formerly enslaved people in this collection include an 1839 letter to William H. Wills from John Cotten (Cotton Land, Leon County, Fla.), regarding an enslaved girl named Lettice; an item, dated circa 1860, referring to the sale of an enslaved girl; two letters written by Washington Wills, an enslaved man, in 1864 and 1865; a class book from the Albemarle Circuit of the Washington County Methodist Protestant Church that contains lists of enslaved members; and an 1874 memorandum concerning land sold to John W. Heptinstall on behalf of Bob Wills, a formerly enslaved man. There is also other correspondence between white family members regarding the enslaved workforce and the overseers on their plantations, as well as the possible split between the Northern and Southern Methodist Episcopal Church due to a disagreement over slavery.

This collection offers good documentation of itinerant ministers of the Methodist Protestant church in North Carolina and church administration between the 1840s and 1890s. Information appears on circuit travels, camp meetings, local churches, finances, arbitration and trials, race relations within the church, and local, state, district, and national church administration.

Other topics on which the collection is particularly useful are marriage and family; boarding school life; plantation affairs; general merchants; slavery; politics; American Civil War camp life; and women teachers in the postbellum period. Letters appear from students at Chowan Female Collegiate Institute (Murfreesboro N.C.), Warrenton Female College (Warrenton, N.C.), Baltimore Female College, and the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C., and teachers at Joyner's Depot, N.C., the Oxford Orphan Asylum (Oxford, N.C.), and Littleton, N.C. Letters also appear from soldiers in the 2nd North Carolina Infantry Regiment, the 17th North Carolina Infantry Regiment, and 43rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment, and from Washington Wills, an enslaved person who travelled with the 2nd and 43rd Regiments. Most of the plantation papers are those of cotton plantation owners in eastern North Carolina, Jackson County, Fla., and Leon County, Fla. Business-related items include an account book for

a general merchandising concern in Halifax, N.C., accounts for the Fishing Creek Navigation Company (Halifax), and an account book for a Tarboro, N.C. commission merchant.

The bulk of the collection consists of postbellum family correspondence and religious correspondence, but there are also a considerable number of financial and legal papers, including estate papers, correspondence, deeds, land surveys, receipts, loan notes, court summonses and judgments, wills, and other items. About thirty of these items are from the eighteenth century. Religious papers also contain reports, trial documents, sermons, religious essays (most written by Julia Rankin), circuit class books, and marriage licenses. Miscellaneous antebellum volumes include travel diaries, documenting travel in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Maryland, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Alabama; the diary of a Tampa, Fla., land official; an arithmetic book; and a volume of poetry. There is also some genealogical material on the Wills family and related families.

Series 1 contains antebellum, American Civil War, and postbellum correspondence of the Wills family and related Whitaker family and Norman family. Included are letters from relatives in North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Maryland, and New York.

Series 2 contains the religious papers of William Wills between the 1840s and 1880s, with scattered items for Reverend Richard Wills, Reverend Swain Swift, and church member Julia Rankin.

Series 3 comprises antebellum plantation, business, estate papers, and volumes, including a few eighteenth-century items, and postbellum plantation and estate papers.

Antebellum diaries and other volumes appear in Series 4.

Series 5 includes mostly genealogical notes and biographical sketches, and Series 6 contains one tintype of George Whitaker Wills.

The Addition of August 2005 is a volume of copies of business letters from William Wills dating from 1834 to 1838.

The Addition of April 2011 includes three bound travel journals and several hundred pages of undated sermon notes. The journals, covering 1851-1856 and 1866-1882, document Wills's activities as a Methodist Protestant circuit rider in North Carolina, including date and location of services, a selected biblical passage, and a general topic for the sermon. Locations appearing repeatedly include Bethesda, Harmony, Union, Corinth, Eden, and Marsh Chapel, among others. However, it is unclear whether these are the names of towns or congregations where he visited. Sermon notes, several of which are written on envelopes, include a biblical passage followed by detailed exegesis of the passage with references to related texts and Wills's own thoughts and interpretation. There are also scanned photographs and documents relating to Wills and Whitaker family members and a Whitaker family history.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Wilson Special Collections Library

Restrictions to Access

No restrictions. Open for research.

Acquisitions Information

Received from George S. Wills of Westminster, Md., in 1929 with several additions deposited between that time and 1955; received from Phil Perkinson of Norlina, N.C., August 2005 (Acc. 100156).

The Addition of April 2011 (Acc. 101418) received from Betsy Brodie Roberts of Oak Island, N.C.

Processing Information

Processed by: Ellen R. Strong, February 1964 and Jill Snider, August 1992.

Encoded by: Valerie Gillispie, November 2005

This collection was rehoused under the sponsorship of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Office of Preservation, Washington, D.C., 1990-1992.

Updated because of addition by Valerie Gillispie, November 2005.

Updated because of addition by Martin Gengenbach, July 2011.

[Conscious Editing](#) Work by: Dawne Howard Lucas, July 2022. Updated collection overview, subject headings, biographical note, scope and content, and container list.

Since August 2017, we have added ethnic and racial identities for individuals and families represented in collections. To determine identity, we rely on self-identification; other information supplied to the repository by collection creators or sources; public records, press accounts, and secondary sources; and contextual information in the collection materials. Omissions of ethnic and racial identities in finding aids created or updated after August 2017 are an indication of insufficient information to make an educated guess or an individual's preference for identity information to be excluded from description. When we have misidentified, please let us know at wilsonlibrary@unc.edu.

Copyright Notice

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Related Materials

Related Collections

- 1 Ferdinand Hannon Whitaker Papers (#1002)
- 2 Cary Whitaker Papers (#767)
- 3 Spier Whitaker Papers (#768)
- 4 Whitaker and Snipes Family Papers (#770)
- 5 Absalom Benton Whitaker Papers (#1124)
- 6 Whitaker and Meader Family Papers (#1132)

Items Separated

- 1 Oversize papers (OPF-792/1)
- 2 Special format photograph (SF-P-792/1)
- 3 Oversize volume (SV-792/1)
- 4 Digital folders (DF-792/1-3)

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Controlled Access Headings

- Camp meetings--North Carolina--History--19th century.
- Clergy--North Carolina--History--19th century.
- Cotton growing--Florida--History--19th century.
- Cotton growing--North Carolina--History--19th century.
- Diaries (Blank-books)
- Edgecombe County (N.C.)--Social life and customs.
- Enslaved persons--Florida.
- Enslaved persons--North Carolina--Correspondence.
- Families--Florida.
- Families--North Carolina.
- Florida--Social life and customs.

- Halifax County (N.C.)--Social life and customs.
- Key West (Fla.)--Social life and customs.
- Methodist Church--North Carolina--History--19th century.
- Miami (Fla.)--Social life and customs.
- North Carolina--Social life and customs.
- Orphanages--North Carolina--History.
- Plantations--Florida.
- Plantations--North Carolina.
- Seminole Indians--History--19th century.
- Seminole War, 3rd, 1855-1858.
- Sermons.
- Slavery--Florida.
- Slavery--North Carolina.
- Slavery--United States--History--19th century--Sources
- Tampa (Fla.)--Social life and customs.
- Travelers--Southern States--Diaries--History--19th century.
- Washington County (N.C.)--Social life and customs.
- Women teachers--North Carolina--History--19th century.
- Women--Education--North Carolina--History--19th century.
- Women--Religious life--North Carolina.
- Baltimore Female College.
- Chowan Female Collegiate Institute (Murfreesboro N.C.)
- Confederate States of America. Army--Military life.
- Confederate States of America. Army. North Carolina Infantry Regiment, 2nd.
- Confederate States of America. Army. North Carolina Infantry Regiment, 17th.
- Confederate States of America. Army. North Carolina Infantry Regiment, 43rd.
- Confederate States of America. Army--African Americans.
- Cotten family.
- Cotton Land (Fla.).
- Greenwood (N.C.).
- Methodist Episcopal Church--History--19th century.
- Methodist Protestant Church (U.S. : 1830-1939)--History--19th century.
- Norma, Joseph S., -1864.
- Oxford Orphan Asylum (N.C.)
- Snell, Robert, active 1816-1841.
- Spring Grove (N.C.).
- Strawberry Hill (N.C.).
- Swain family.
- Swift family.
- Warrenton Female College (Warrenton, N.C.)
- Whitaker, Cary, 1782-1858.
- Whitaker, Cary, 1832-1865.
- Whitaker family.
- Whitaker Family Plantation (Jackson County, Fla).
- Whitaker Family Plantation (Leon County, Fla).
- Wills family.

- Wills, William H. (William Henry), 1809-1889.

Collection Inventory

1. Family Correspondence, 1803-1912 and undated., 1803-1912

Physical Description: 560 items

Arrangement

Arrangement: by family.

Scope and Contents

Correspondence of William H. and Anna Wills of Brinkleyville, N.C., principally with each other, their children, and Whitaker, Cotten, and Smith relatives in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida. Letters exchanged by the Wills children appear in the American Civil War years (1861-1865). Other correspondence is for the Whitaker family, especially Cary Whitaker of Enfield, N.C., and Jackson County, Fla., and for the Norman family of Plymouth, N.C.

Topics in the letters include courtship, marriage and family, religious doctrine, camp meetings, travels of itinerant ministers, boarding school life, plantation affairs, politics, slavery, secession, camp life and fighting during the American Civil War, postwar economic difficulties, and women's teaching.

1.1. William and Anna Wills Family, 1817-1912 and undated., 1817-1912

Physical Description: 485 items

Arrangement

Arrangement: chronological.

Scope and Contents

Primarily correspondence between William H. and Anna Wills and letters they exchanged with their children, with Whitaker, Cotten, and Smith relatives, and with various friends. There are also American Civil War letters that were exchanged by the Wills children. A few turn-of-the-century letters appear for George S. Wills.

1.1.1. Correspondence, 1817, 1829-1860., 1817, 1829-1860

Physical Description: 125 items

Scope and Contents

Mostly correspondence between William and Anna with additional letters they received from their son Richard and letters exchanged with Whitaker, Cotten, and Smith relatives.

The earliest item is a letter, dated 3 November 1817, from Josiah and Priscilla Wells of Jefferson County, Ga., to Richard Wells of Tarboro, N.C., discussing family and listing their children's names. The letter encouraged Richard, who may have been William Wills's father, to move to Georgia.

Correspondence 1829-1833 consists of letters to Anna at boarding school from her father, advising her on her deportment and education and giving news of the family, and letters between William and Spencer D. Cotten of Tarboro concerning business affairs, crops, family, politics, and church news. One item, dated 1833, from W. C. Whitaker, discusses William's business prospects in Enfield, N.C., and the future of the Methodist Protestant Church. No letters appear for 1834. In early 1835, two letters from William to Anna discuss their plans to marry.

After their marriage in 1835, William and Anna wrote each other frequently when William was away on business and later travelling as an itinerant minister. William described buying trips to New York, 1835-1836; a trip to Georgia and Florida to explore economic possibilities, 1837; and his circuit travels, 1839-1858. His letters discuss local amusements, business affairs, travel conditions, his health, camp meetings, other ministers, parishioners, church conflicts, and General Conference news, and give instructions on plantation matters. Anna's letters 1835-1858 give news of home, their children, the plantation, and the health of relatives.

Letters from Richard and scattered relatives make up the bulk of the remaining correspondence. Richard wrote between 1850 and 1860 from Tarboro, Mackey's Ferry, and Plymouth discussing his preaching and religious thoughts and giving news of friends. Plantation and family affairs dominate the letters of other relatives, including John Cotten, 1839-1845; Cary Whitaker, 1835-1847; and Lawrence B. Whitaker, 1838-1850. Of note is a letter from John Cotten dated 26 December 1839 in which he discussed his hopes to buy an enslaved girl, Lettice, to keep her with her family. Lettice had previously been enslaved by John's father, Spencer D. Cotten. Cary Whitaker's letters are especially rich in information describing his plantation in Jackson County, Fla., giving news of his brothers Eli and Absalom, who lived on plantations in neighboring Leon County, Fla., and discussing enslaved people, crops, and the Seminole people. Plantation and family affairs also dominate the letters of Marianne (M.B.) Smith, who wrote from Greenwood Plantation, Spring Grove Plantation, and Scotland Neck, N.C., between 1840 and 1845.

Other letters of note are from Spencer D. Cotten, who wrote between 1836 and his death in 1838 concerning family and business prospects in Alabama; from Reverend Samuel J. Harris, who wrote in 1840 concerning his health and Whig politics; and from George A. T. Whitaker, who wrote between 1842 and 1845 discussing his studies at a seminary in Windsor and his position at a church in Charleston, S.C.

One undated letter from A. M. Baker to her children at boarding school gives motherly advice.

Correspondence, 1835, 1835	Document Case 1 folder 2
Correspondence, 1836-1837, 1836-1837	Document Case 1 folder 3
Correspondence, 1838-1842, 1838-1842	Document Case 1 folder 4

Scope and Contents

Includes a letter to William H. Wills from John Cotten (Cotton Land, Leon County, Fla.) dated 26 December 1839, in which Cotten asks Wills to find and purchase an enslaved girl named Lettice, so that she can be with her parents and siblings, whom Cotten owns. Lettice had been enslaved by John's father, Spencer D. Cotten, who died in 1838.

Correspondence, 1843-1849, 1843-1849	Document Case 1 folder 5
Correspondence, 1850, 1850	Document Case 1 folder 6
Correspondence, 1854-1860 and undated, 1854-1860	Document Case 1 folder 7

1.1.2. American Civil War Letters, 1861-1865., 1861-1865

Physical Description: 160 items

Scope and Contents

Wills family letters by William H. Wills and his sons, Richard H., George Whitaker (43d North Carolina Infantry Regiment), and Edward (2nd North Carolina Infantry Regiment). Many of the letters are addressed to Anna and Mary Wills. A few other letters appear from Captain Cary Whitaker, Washington Wills (an enslaved man), and scattered friends. The letters describe army camp life in detail and give insight into family and religious affairs during the war.

William's letters to Anna in 1861 and 1862, written from Yorktown, Camp Fayetteville, and Petersburg, Va., concern their son George's ill health, their plantation, and family and friends. William also wrote, 1861-1865, from home to Richard, who was preaching on various circuits, advising him on his ministry and personal matters, discussing church affairs and doctrine, and giving news of the family and the people they enslaved.

Richard wrote most often to his parents from Mackey's Ferry, N.C., Plymouth, N.C., and Summerfield, N.C., 1861-1865. Early letters discuss secession, war preparations, his travels, camp meetings, slavery, other ministers and parishioners, his marriage prospects, and the possibilities of his becoming an army chaplain. Later letters focus on his new wife Louisa Norman and her family, his health and finances, religious thoughts, and his ministry in Guilford County, N.C. He often wrote about race relations within the Methodist Protestant Church and the Christian justification of slavery.

George Whitaker Wills wrote from numerous camps in eastern North Carolina, central Virginia, and Maryland to his parents and his sister Mary between 1861 and his death in 1864. He gave news of Wash (Washington Wills), an enslaved man who worked as

cook in his mess; Mr. Page (probably Reverend Jesse Page, his brother-in-law); Cary Whitaker (his uncle and captain of his company); and other friends and relatives who served with him. General topics include his health, camp elections, his attempts to obtain a commission, preachers in camp, the death of friends, daily camp life, and skirmishes and battles. The letters often contain information on the activities of his sisters Mary and Lucy and his brother Edward at home.

Edward Wills wrote from camps near Weldon, N.C., Goldsborough, N.C., and Smithfield, N.C., in 1864-1865. He discussed friends, camp life, his duties, deserters, the activities of Wash (who travelled with him after George's death), and his battle experiences.

Capt. Cary Whitaker wrote to the Wills from Yorktown, Va., and Camp Fayetteville, Va., in 1861 about George's ill health and from Petersburg, Va., in 1864 concerning family and legal matters.

Two letters appear from Washington Wills. He wrote Richard Wills on 30 October 1864 regarding George's death, and communicating his intention to join Edward Wills. He wrote again on 12 March 1865 from Goldsborough, N.C., reporting that Edward and his friend Willie had been in battle, but were safe.

Other items of note are several letters William and Anna received in 1864 expressing sympathy over George's death.

American Civil War letters, 1861, 1861	Document Case 1 folder 8
American Civil War letters, 1862, 1862	Document Case 1 folder 9
American Civil War letters, 1863, 1863	Document Case 1 folder 10
American Civil War letters, 1864: February-June, 1864: February-June	Document Case 1 folder 11
American Civil War letters, 1864: July-December, 1864: July-December	Document Case 1 folder 12

Scope and Contents

Includes a letter written by Washington Wills, an enslaved man, to Richard Wills, 30 October 1864, regarding the death of George Whitaker Wills, and communicating his intention to join Edward Wills.

American Civil War letters, 1865, 1865	Document Case 1 folder 13
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Scope and Contents

Includes a letter written by Washington Wills, an enslaved man, to Richard Wills, 12 March 1865. Washington Wills wrote from Goldsborough, N.C., reporting that Edward Wills and his friend Willie had been in battle, but were safe.

1.1.3. Correspondence, 1866-1912 and undated., 1866-1912

Physical Description: 200 items

Scope and Contents

Principally correspondence of William Wills with Anna and Richard. Many letters also appear from William and Anna's daughters Lucy Wills, Martha Wills Page, and Mary Wills. Miscellaneous other letters are chiefly from C. A. Pickens, Mrs. A. M. McKinney, and George A. T. Whitaker.

Correspondence between William and Anna appears, 1866-1871 and 1876-1882. William wrote while on circuits in central North Carolina and while attending General Conference meetings. His letters describe his travels; church activities; camp meetings; economic, educational, and agricultural conditions; and his future plans. He also discussed issues addressed at the General Conference and gave instructions for the farm. Later letters focus on church affairs in the Greensboro area. Anna's letters to William discuss activities of their children, especially Edward; farm affairs and family finances; church news; and her concerns over his health. Of note is a letter, dated 19 May 1877, in which she offered her opinion on the union of the Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal Churches.

Letters from Richard in Mackey's Ferry, Salem Church, Winston, Greensboro, and Yadkin College, 1866-1882, often contain detailed discussions of his ministries in those locations; national church affairs, especially the union question; his planting activities; and news of his growing family. Of note is a letter of 20 April 1870 addressing a division in the conference over the union issue. His letters (see especially 10 May 1870 and 25 July 1873) evince fears of racial amalgamation should the churches unite. William's letters to Richard in 1867, 1870, and 1873 discuss mostly religious doctrine and provide church, family, and plantation news.

Letters home from Lucy Wills, mostly in 1866 from Joyner's Depot, discuss her teaching, friends and relatives, and neighborhood religious affairs. Lucy also wrote in 1867, 1869-1870, and 1876 from Town Creek, French Broad, and Enfield, discussing her husband, children, and farming. Letters from Martha Wills Page in 1870, 1877, 1879, and 1881 are from Cary and Oxford and discuss mostly her farm and husband. Mary Wills wrote in 1872 from boarding school in Greensboro and from her sister Martha's house in Cary; in 1877 from Brinkleyville; in 1878-1879 from the orphan asylum in Oxford where she taught; in 1881 from Chapel Hill, where she attended the summer Normal School; and in 1882 from Littleton where she taught. Her letters discuss her students and teaching conditions, church affairs, and news of friends and relatives.

Only a few letters appear from Edward, Harriet, and Agnes Wills. Dated in 1866, 1869, 1871, and 1879, they discuss family and plantation news.

Other correspondents of note are George A. T. Whitaker, who wrote, 1874-1876 and 1882, concerning his family, crops, health, and ministries; C. A. Pickens, who wrote in 1871-1872 mostly about family, crops, and church news; and Mrs. A. M. McKinney,

who wrote in 1871-1872 from New York criticizing Ulysses S. Grant, high taxes, and the building of streets in the city.

Miscellaneous turn-of-the-century letters are two addressed to George S. Wills in 1902 and to Harriet and Mary Wills in 1912 concerning family.

Correspondence, 1866-1868, 1866-1868	Document Case 1 folder 14
Correspondence, 1869, 1869	Document Case 1 folder 15
Correspondence, 1870, 1870	Document Case 2 folder 16
Correspondence, 1871-1875, 1871-1875	Document Case 2 folder 17
Correspondence, 1876-1877, 1876-1877	Document Case 2 folder 18
Correspondence, 1878-1879, 1878-1879	Document Case 2 folder 19
Correspondence, 1880-1881, 1880-1881	Document Case 2 folder 20
Correspondence, 1882, 1882	Document Case 2 folder 21
Correspondence, 1888-1912 and undated, 1888-1912	Document Case 2 folder 22

1.2. Whitaker Family, 1803-1857 and undated., 1803-1857

Physical Description: 42 items

Scope and Contents

Letters received by Cary Whitaker of Enfield, N.C., from family and friends in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Tennessee. One letter, dated 1848, is from James C. Whitaker in Pine Bluff, Tenn., to his cousin George A. T. Whitaker, and discusses the Buffalo Mission, his crops, and the "wicked and unjust" Mexican War.

Most of the letters to Cary Whitaker are from his children, including Anna, while she boarded at Mr. Ezzell's school, 1832, and after her marriage to William Wills in 1835; George A. T., while he served as a minister in South Carolina in 1845 and planted in Florida in the late 1840s; Cary, while he studied at the University of North Carolina. 1850-1851, and travelled through western North Carolina, 1857; and Margaret, while she attended Chowan Female Collegiate Institute in Murfreesboro, N.C., 1850-1853. The letters focus chiefly on school life and family and plantation affairs. Of note are letters from Anna and her husband in 1839 expressing their opinions on Whitaker's moving to Florida. George wrote from Charleston describing church conflicts there and the possible split between the Northern and Southern Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery, and from Jackson County, Marianna, and Oakland, Fla., concerning crops, enslaved people, overseers, and Cary Whitaker's business affairs in that state.

Another correspondent of note is Whitaker's brother Eli, who wrote in 1836 from Leon County, Fla., expressing sympathy on the death of Cary's wife and mentioning conflicts with the local Seminole people. Miscellaneous letters are from school friends, 1803, 1805, concerning friendship, courting, and family; from nieces and nephews in Jackson County and Tallahassee, Fla., and White Oak and Wayne County, Tenn., giving news of family and finances; and from scattered friends and relatives near his home. Of interest

is an 1864 letter from A. Joyner of Weldon discussing Whig politics and preparations for the upcoming presidential election.

Whitaker family correspondence, 1803-1839,
1803-1839

Document Case 2 folder 23

Whitaker family correspondence, 1840-1852,
1840-1852

Document Case 2 folder 24

Whitaker family correspondence, 1853-1857 and
undated, 1853-1857

Document Case 2 folder 25

1.3. Norman Family, 1844-1892., 1844-1892

Physical Description: 30 items

Scope and Contents

Letters received by Anna Louisa Norman from schoolmates, her brothers, and friends, and letters received by her father Joseph S. Norman of Plymouth, N.C., from friends and colleagues, pertaining primarily to politics and church affairs. The bulk of the letters to Louisa (LuLu) are from Sallie Collinson, a schoolmate at Baltimore Female College, in 1860, expressing Sallie's strong feelings toward her friend and giving news of other friends and family. Letters from other schoolmates discuss travel, vacation plans, men, teaching, and the possibility of secession. Louisa also received letters from her brothers Joseph S. Norman and Lieut. Thomas J. Norman. Joseph, writing from Camp Campbell in 1862, gave news gathered second-hand of their family's plantation, which they had abandoned upon the arrival of Union forces in the area. Thomas wrote Louisa from near Petersburg in 1864, describing the tedium of camp life, the death of friends, and his wife and child. Letters, 1891-1892, are from friends expressing sympathy over the death of Louisa's husband Richard H. Wills.

Joseph S. Norman, Sr., received letters from George A. T. Whitaker in Scotland Neck, N.C., 1844; David R. Lindsay in Washington City, N.C., 1858; and Richard H. Wills in Mackey's Ferry, N.C., 1862, discussing politics and church affairs. Of note is Lindsay's letter of 23 August 1858 congratulating Norman on his election to the North Carolina House and "the glorious redemption of good old Washington County from the inglorious thralldom of Know-Nothingism."

An additional item of note is a letter, 1861, from R. L. Burckett of Libertytown in Frederick County, Md., to Lt. Thomas J. Norman, a prisoner at Fort Warren, Boston Harbor, Mass., discussing the remoteness of the war from his location and offering his aid should he need anything.

Norman family correspondence, 1844-1892,
1844-1892

Document Case 2 folder 26

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1A. Letterbook, 1834-1838 and undated (Addition of August 2005), 1834-1838

Physical Description: 1 item

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Acquisitions information: Accession 101156

Scope and Contents

A volume of copies of business letters from William Wills dating from 1834 to 1838. The main topic discussed is cotton sales, although purchases of other goods, such as coffee and books, are also mentioned. Wills frequently wrote from his home in Halifax, N.C., to Petersburg, Va., and Enfield, N.C.

A number of the pages are obscured by pasted-in clippings of recipes and homemaking tips. It is not clear when these items were added to the volume. The volume is also missing several pages.

Letterbook, 1834-1838 and undated, 1834-1838

Document Case 5 folder 71

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2. Religious Papers, 1809-1891 and undated., 1809-1891

Physical Description: 460 items

Arrangement

Arrangement: by type.

Scope and Contents

Circuit travel journal; letters to the editor and obituaries contributed to Methodist publications; religious writings and sermons; class books; religious correspondence; and administrative papers related to several offices William H. Wills held in the Methodist Protestant Church. Wills was president of the North Carolina Annual Conference from 1849 to 1851 and in 1860; president of the General Conference in 1866; and president of the district in 1870. He was also a Superannuate from 1874 to 1876, and participated on a number of General Conference committees over the years. Administrative papers include marriage licenses, ministerial credentials, trial documents, and miscellaneous items. Individual items appear for Methodist Protestant ministers, Richard H. Wills and Swain Swift.

2.1. Circuit Travel Journal, 1849-1880., 1849-1880

Physical Description: 30 items

Scope and Contents

Journal kept by William Wills of his activities on several North Carolina circuits, including Davidson, Randolph, Yadkin, Roanoke, Granville, Orange, Guilford, Alamance, Cleveland, Mocksville, and Tar River. He made fairly regular entries between January and November in 1849, 1850, and 1869. Two fragments are dated 30 October 1877

and 25 June 1880. Wills submitted his journal monthly to the Methodist Protestant for publication. Described are his travels; ministers and other individuals he visited; the activities, finances, and memberships of various churches; camp meetings and quarterly meetings; weather conditions; and the outlook for Methodist Protestantism in different locations. Of note is an undated entry discussing the potentially damaging effects of divided opinions regarding slavery on the Methodist Protestant denomination.

Circuit travel journal, 1849: 13 January-21 September, 1849: 13 January-21 September	Document Case 2 folder 27
Circuit travel journal, 1850: 27 January-17 October, 1850: 27 January-17 October	Document Case 2 folder 28
Circuit travel journal, 1869: 9 January-July, 1869: 9 January-July	Document Case 2 folder 29
Circuit travel journal, 1869: 30 July-November; 1877; 1880: June and undated, 1869: 30 July-November; 1877; 1880: June	Document Case 2 folder 30

2.2. Letters to the Editor, 1849-1882., 1849-1882

Physical Description: 49 items

Scope and Contents

A number of letters to the editors of the Methodist Protestant of Baltimore, the Central Protestant of Greensboro, N.C., and the Methodist Recorder, written by Wills between 1849 and 1882. Topics of interest include divided opinions about slavery (see 1 June 1855, 12 December 1856, and 19 April 1858) and the relationship of the Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal churches (see 8 December 1860, 22 July 1861, 7 June 1867, 26 June 1877, November 1876, and October 1877). Other topics include church finances and the payment of ministers; denominational and district conferences and conventions; the need for more revivals; "Christian Perfection" ; moral crisis; misquotation of scriptures; "False Pronunciation" ; "Sabbath Desecration" ; and district organization.

Letters to the editor, 1849-1860, 1849-1860	Document Case 2 folder 31
Letters to the editor, 1861-1877, 1861-1877	Document Case 2 folder 32
Letters to the editor, 1878-1882, 1878-1882	Document Case 2 folder 33

2.3. Obituaries, 1846-1882., 1846-1882

Physical Description: 27 items

Scope and Contents

Obituaries prepared by Wills for the Methodist Protestant, Central Protestant, and Methodist Recorder for parishioners and fellow ministers, including Reverend James Hunt (d. 1849); Reverend William E. Bellamy (d. 1853); Reverend B. L. Hoskins (d. 1860); and Reverend John F. Speight (d. 1860). Details of individuals' lives and church

activities are often included. Obituaries of family members are for Dr. Cary Whitaker (d. 1858) and Lawrence Baker Whitaker (d. 1864).

Obituaries, 1846-1882, 1846-1882

Document Case 3 folder 34

2.4. Religious Writings, 1836-1878 and undated., 1836-1878

Physical Description: 17 items

Scope and Contents

Sermons, addresses, essays, and notes composed by Wills between 1836 and 1878 and essays by Julia Rankin of Greensboro, N.C. in 1877. Wills wrote sermons and notes on baptism, 1843, 1847, and undated; an address to the women of Speight's Chapel upon their donation of an organ, 1878; an address to the Royal White Masonic Lodge on the history and character of Free Masonry, 1836; an essay on class meetings to be read before the First Subdistrict Association, 1878; and miscellaneous undated notes. Julia Rankin (alias "Constance") submitted several essays to Wills in 1877 for publication in the Central Protestant. Topics include practical religion, grace, camp meetings, death, sensualism, and "speaking evil one of another." Rankin may also have written under the pseudonym of Kate A. Correspondence between Rankin and Wills, some of which discusses her writings, appears in Subseries 2.6.

Religious writings, 1836-1847, 1836-1847

Document Case 3 folder 35

Religious writings, 1877-1878 and undated,
1877-1878

Document Case 3 folder 36

2.5. Class Books, 1861-1871., 1861-1871

Physical Description: 2 items

Scope and Contents

"Class book for Halifax Circuit Nov. 1868" (156 p.) and "Class Book for Albemarle Circuit, Washington County Methodist Protestant Church" (117 p.). The Halifax volume was kept by C. A. Pickens, superintendent of the Halifax Circuit of the North Carolina District between 1868 and 1870. Enclosed at the end of the volume is a "List of Members on Halifax Circuit," compiled by Richard H. Wills, superintendent, for 1870-1871. Information in this volume concerns the deeding of property to churches, class membership, and the marital status of class members at Marsh Chapel, Corinth, Bethesda, Bloomfield, Harmony, Union, Eden, and Littleton Arbor. Jotted beside some names are notes on marriages and deaths and on personal behavior, such as, "gone to Baptist," "moved west years ago," "dropped for drunkenness," and "runaway with a married man."

The Albemarle Circuit volume contains similar information for class members at Rehobeth, Swift's Chapel, Free Chapel, White Marsh, Albemarle, and Sharon Chapel, Tyrrell County, 1861-1869. This volume also includes lists of members who were enslaved, with their enslavers indicated.

It is unclear whether the class books were kept for Sunday School, Bible study, or other classes, or for church membership in general.

Class books, 1861-1871, 1861-1871

Document Case 3 folder 37

Scope and Contents

The Albemarle Circuit volume includes lists of enslaved members, with their owners indicated.

2.6. Religious Correspondence, 1830-1891., 1830-1891

Physical Description: 300 items

Scope and Contents

Correspondence of William Wills with ministers, church officials, and parishioners related to church administration, policies, finances, publications, and disciplinary actions; North Carolina Annual and General Conference matters; points of doctrine; and activities on the various circuits. Letters range from perfunctory requests for ministerial services at marriage ceremonies and funerals to detailed discussions of daily operations on the North Carolina circuits or at individual churches. Letters also appear from ministers' wives and young women who saw Wills as their spiritual guide. Among Wills's correspondents are fellow ministers W. W. Hill, Samuel J. Harris, A. C. Harris, W. E. Bellamy, John Bellamy, J. L. Swain, Absalom Benton, George E. Hunt, Caswell Drake, John Paris, A. W. Lineberry, C. A. Pickens, and George A. T. Whitaker (personal correspondence with Whitaker appears in Series 1). Parishioners of note are Mattie Shivers (later Fields), a student at Warrenton Female College; Lilah (Mrs. William) Kennett of Guilford County, N.C.; M. E. Thacker of Quiet Retreat; and Julia C. Rankin of Greensboro, N.C. Wills also corresponded with the editor of the Central Protestant, John L. Michaux, and the editors of the Methodist Protestant, L. W. Bates and E. J. Drinkhouse.

Wills's early correspondence discusses his conversion experience, Methodist Protestant views of slavery, revivals, and general church matters. Topics of interest in the later letters are the union of the Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal churches and the role of race in the decision (see letters 1866-1877); district and circuit boundaries; the financial difficulties of ministers; the loneliness of ministers' wives; and personal struggles with religious faith. Many letters request information on how to handle local disputes and give news of specific missions. Letters, 1876-1877, provide considerable information on Mount Moriah Church in Greensboro, N.C., and the Littleton Mission.

American Civil War items are an 1861 letter from C. F. Harris discussing camp meetings and other ministers; an 1862 letter from S. H. Wilson, asking Wills to be a representative to the Confederate States Bible Convention; and an 1865 letter from J. L. Swain, deploring the lack of chaplains in the army.

Additional items of note are a letter of 4 February 1869 concerning competition faced by Methodist Protestants from Northern Methodist ministers and Mormons; a letter, dated 10 May 1882, from Wills to the "General Assembly C. P. Church, Huntsville, Ala.," which

gives a brief history of Methodist Protestantism; and two letters, dated 1 December 1875 and 1 June 1877, from George A. T. Whitaker discussing his fear that Black people would gain equality in the church if the Protestants and Episcopalians united. One item, a letter to Reverend Richard Wills, appears for 1891, and discusses training an orphaned boy as a minister.

Considerable information can also be found on religious topics in William Wills's correspondence with his wife Anna and son Richard (see Series 1).

Religious correspondence, 1830-1835, 1830-1835	Document Case 3 folder 38
Religious correspondence, 1837-1865, 1837-1865	Document Case 3 folder 39
Religious correspondence, 1866-1867, 1866-1867	Document Case 3 folder 40
Religious correspondence, 1868-1869, 1868-1869	Document Case 3 folder 41
Religious correspondence, 1870-1871, 1870-1871	Document Case 3 folder 42
Religious correspondence, 1872-1874, 1872-1874	Document Case 3 folder 43
Religious correspondence, 1875, 1875	Document Case 3 folder 44
Religious correspondence, 1876, 1876	Document Case 3 folder 45
Religious correspondence, 1877-1878, 1877-1878	Document Case 3 folder 46
Religious correspondence, 1879-1880, 1879-1880	Document Case 3 folder 47
Religious correspondence, 1881-1891, 1881-1891	Document Case 3 folder 48

2.7. Administrative Papers, 1809-1891., 1809-1891

Physical Description: 32 items

Scope and Contents

Papers related to the pastoral duties of William Wills and Swain Swift, another Methodist Protestant minister, and papers kept by Wills pertaining to internal church, the North Carolina Annual Conference, and General Conference affairs. Topics of note are union between the Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal Churches and church administration.

Items include reports of General Conference committees on which Wills served (mostly postbellum); marriage licenses for couples married by Wills and Swain Swift; and ministerial credentials of Wills, 1831-1836, and Swift, 1809. Of special note are an Annual Conference resolution, 1828, on the trial of W. W. Hill of Halifax County, N.C., for seducing a parishioner; a number of documents concerning an arbitrated dispute between Wills and a Reverend Samuel Welles, 1842-1843; Wills's report as president to the North Carolina Annual Conference, 1849; a list of subscribers for the establishment of Mount Moriah Church in Guilford County, N.C., 1854; and an 1860 history of the North Carolina Annual Conference. A set of resolutions passed upon the death of Richard H. Wills by an unidentified church at which he served as minister appears for 1891.

Administrative papers, 1809-1843, 1809-1843

Document Case 4 folder 49

Administrative papers, 1844-1891, 1844-1891

Document Case 4 folder 50

[Return to Table of Contents](#)**3. Financial and Legal Papers, 1712-1921 and undated., 1712-1921**Physical Description: 315 items**Scope and Contents**

Financial and legal papers, including plantation and merchant accounts, estate papers, business correspondence, deeds, and other items. Papers chiefly relate to William H. Wills, general merchant and cotton plantation owner of Brinkleyville, N.C.; his son, Richard H. Wills, farmer of Plymouth, N.C., and later Greensboro, N.C.; Cary Whitaker, cotton plantation owner of Enfield, N.C.; his son Capt. Cary Whitaker; Robert Snell, liquor distiller of Washington County, N.C.; Joseph S. Norman, cotton plantation owner of Plymouth; and various Swain and Swift relatives of Norman in Tyrrell, Washington, Halifax, and Albemarle counties in North Carolina. Estate papers are for Spencer D. Cotten and Isaac Davenport.

3.1. Wills Family Financial and Legal Papers, 1808-1921 and undated., 1808-1921Physical Description: 135 items**Scope and Contents**

Plantation and business papers, mostly postbellum, of William H. Wills and Richard H. Wills, including the estate papers of Spencer D. Cotten, commission merchant and financial agent of Tarboro, N.C. A few items appear for other Wills family members.

3.1.1. Wills Family Financial and Legal Papers, 1808-1860., 1808-1860Physical Description: 16 items**Scope and Contents**

Principally deeds, legal agreements, legal notices, receipts, land plats, account book, and other items relating to the property holdings and plantation and business affairs of William H. Wills in Halifax County and to his activities as co-administrator of the estate of Spencer D. Cotten of Tarboro, N.C.

Of note is an account book (263 p.) kept by Wills for his general merchandise concern in Halifax, N.C., which sold mostly dry goods, clothing, hardware items, and groceries. Daily entries appear between 20 October 1834 and 3 April 1837. Irregular entries (sometimes weekly, sometimes monthly) appear between 12 June 1837 and 1 April 1843. A single entry after 1843 is dated 1 January 1848. Also of interest is a daily log (76 p.) of weather conditions kept between December 1845 and December 1850 at Wills's plantation, containing notes on livestock, crops, manure, farm equipment, and sheep shearing.

Among the estate papers of Spencer Cotten are lists of debts owed him and legal items concerning the settlement of his affairs as a partner in R. & S. D. Cotten and

in Cotten, Stewart & Co. An account book, 1821-1839,) documents his financial transactions as a commercial and commission merchant in Tarboro. Pages 1-4 list accounts of monies received and disbursed on behalf of Henry K. Newcombe & Co. and Alfred Bauree between 1821 and 1824. Pages 5-49 and 54-55 contain copies of letters to bankers and clients concerning money matters and the procuring and sale of goods and lands. Most of the letters are addressed to Alfred Bauree, Jacob Lorillard in New York, John Fleming, Messrs. Henry Waring & Sons, and Tredwell & Thorne, 1830-1837. Pages 51-52 are accounts of land and perishable property sales of the estate of Thomas Guion. The final 22 pages of the volume (p. 56-75) list Cotten's accounts with Vanbokkelin & White of New York, for whom he served as an assignee. Scattered notes made by Wills appear on these pages concerning the final settlement of the accounts.

Miscellaneous items include deeds, 1809 and 1813, for town lots purchased by Richard Wills, possibly William Wills's father, in Tarboro, N.C.

Wills family financial and legal papers, 1808-1860,
1808-1860

Document Case 4 folder 51

Account book, Spencer D. Cotten, 1821-1839,
1821-1839

Document Case 4 folder 52

Account book, William H. Wills, 1834-1848,
1834-1848

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Weather log, William H. Wills, 1845-1850,
1845-1850

Document Case 4 folder 54

3.1.2. Wills Family Papers, 1861-1921 and undated., 1861-1921

Physical Description: 115 items

Scope and Contents

Chiefly the papers of Richard H. and William H. Wills, with scattered items for Edward, Mary, Harriet, and George S. Wills. The papers document plantation and household expenses, land transactions and rentals, and the settlement of William Wills's estate.

Items for Richard H. Wills, dated 1866-1873, 1877, and 1882-1888, include loan notes, tax receipts, and accounts with dry goods and commission merchants, grocers, blacksmiths, and others. Of note is an agreement to rent land to W. S. Davenport in 1888.

The papers of William H. Wills appear between 1865 and 1892. Of special interest is an 1874 memorandum concerning land sold to John W. Heptinstall for Bob Wills, a man who had been previously enslaved by William H. Wills. Other items are a memorandum of land sold to Edward Wills, 1877; accounts with cotton factors and grocers; loan notes; receipts; and correspondence with Baltimore and Petersburg commission merchants, sewing machine and eye glass manufacturers, and various railroads. Estate papers for Wills, 1889-1892, comprise wills for William and Anna

Wills; an affidavit of the executor's notice; land surveys and plats; a note on the division of Wills's land; and a receipt made out to Edward Wills, executor.

Miscellaneous items are Washington County tax receipts for George S. Wills for 1887-1889; a note concerning a land conveyance made by Mary and Harriet Wills in Halifax County, N.C., 1898; a teaching certificate for Mary Wills, 1901; and insurance papers for a house owned by Mary Wills near Brinkleyville, N.C., 1919 and 1921.

Wills family financial and legal papers, 1865-1876,
1865-1876

Document Case 4 folder 55

Scope and Contents

Includes an 1874 memorandum concerning land sold by William H. Wills to John W. Heptinstall for Bob Wills, a man who had been previously enslaved by William H. Wills.

Wills family financial and legal papers, 1877-1888,
1877-1888

Document Case 4 folder 56

Wills family financial and legal papers, 1889-1921
and undated, 1889-1921

Document Case 4 folder 57

3.2. Whitaker Family Financial and Legal Papers, 1795-1863 and undated., 1795-1863

Physical Description: 16 items

Scope and Contents

Legal papers and business correspondence of Cary Whitaker and American Civil War papers of his son Capt. Cary Whitaker, compiled while he served as judge advocate of Court Martial. One item, a deed dated 1795 for land sold in Halifax County by the trustees of the University of North Carolina, pertains to John Whitaker, Cary Whitaker's father, who served as the trustees' attorney.

Papers of the elder Cary Whitaker include an 1803 list of subscriptions to the Fishing Creek Navigation Company in Halifax County, N.C.; "Accounts of Work on the Creek in the year 1805" ; a receipt for the Raleigh Register, 1832; the will of Richard Smith of Halifax County, N.C., witnessed by Whitaker in 1857; and an undated petition to the General Assembly to incorporate Fishing Creek Navigation Company. Business letters are from McIlwaine Son & Co., commission merchants, concerning the sale of Whitaker's cotton and goods sold him, and from William Nickels concerning the sale of Whitaker's land in Florida.

American Civil War items of the younger Cary Whitaker are orders and charges of desertion and other violations brought against soldiers of the 45th and 50th North Carolina Infantry regiments, the 8th Battalion, and "William I. Dabney's Company, Heavy Field Artillery."

Whitaker family financial and legal papers,
1795-1863 and undated, 1795-1863

Document Case 4 folder 58

3.3. Robert Snell Financial and Legal Papers, 1816-1840., 1816-1840

Physical Description: 85 items

Scope and Contents

Chiefly court summonses and judgments, loan notes, and receipts pertaining to the legal affairs of Robert Snell of Washington County, N.C., 1816-1840. Items for 1834 are primarily papers kept by Snell as administrator of the estate of Isaac Davenport, a soldier killed in the War of 1812. Included are letters exchanged by Snell's lawyer, Thomas Turner, with the Treasury Department, and by Thomas H. Hall with the Department of War's Bounty Land Office concerning obtaining a land grant and wages due Davenport. Also appearing are notes on Davenport's service and bills from Turner. Other items include miscellaneous household accounts, bills, and liquor distilling licenses for 1833, 1834, and 1836.

Robert Snell financial and legal papers, 1816-1833,
1816-1833

Document Case 4 folder 59

Robert Snell financial and legal papers, 1834-1840,
1834-1840

Document Case 4 folder 60

3.4. Norman, Swain, and Swift Families Financial and Legal Papers, 1712-1865., 1712-1865

Physical Description: 75 items

Scope and Contents

Papers pertaining to the land holdings and plantation, estate, and legal affairs of Joseph S. Norman and his Swain and Swift relatives. Papers for Norman, mostly deeds, appear between 1852 and 1860. One item, dated 1860?, refers to the sale of an enslaved girl. Norman's estate papers, kept by his executor Swain S. Norman, appear in 1864-1865. Of particular note is a letter, dated 1865, to Gen. O. O. Howard, appealing for the return of lands confiscated from Norman.

Other items relate to John Swain (fl. 1722-1748); Joshua Swain (fl. 1762-1793); Elizabeth Swain (fl. 1795); Joshua Swift (fl. 1788-1845); Swain Swift (fl. 1820-1820); Thomas Norman (fl. 1827-1837); Swain S. Norman (fl. 1864-1865); and others, including John Blount and Thomas Blount. The bulk of these papers are deeds and estate papers, including receipts, notices, and court orders, with scattered accounts and correspondence.

Items of special interest include the appointment of Joshua Swain as a captain in the Tyrrell County (N.C.) militia, 1779; appointments of Joshua Swain as guardian to his grandchildren, 1792-1793; the will of Esther Pollock, 1802; the appointment of Dempsey Taylor as deputy postmaster of Northampton County, 1812; the appointment of Swain Swift as a justice of the peace for Washington County, N.C., 1820; directions for the

administration of Swain Swift's estate, 1831; and a list of fines paid E. B. Smith, clerk of the Halifax County (N.C.) Superior Court, 1822.

Norman, Swain, and Swift families financial and legal papers, 1712-1769, 1712-1769

Document Case 4 folder 61

Indenture: John Blount to Thomas Blount, 5 November 1761

Oversize Box 9 Oversize Paper
Folder OPF-792/1

Norman, Swain, and Swift families financial and legal papers, 1875-1797, 1875-1797

Document Case 4 folder 62

Norman, Swain, and Swift families financial and legal papers, 1801-1829, 1801-1829

Document Case 4 folder 63

Norman, Swain, and Swift families financial and legal papers, 1831-1865, undated, 1831-1865

Document Case 5 folder 64

Scope and Contents

Includes an item, dated 1860?, referring to the sale of an enslaved girl.

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4. Diaries and Miscellaneous Volumes, 1833-1856., 1833-1856

Physical Description: 6 items

Scope and Contents

Travel diaries kept by William H. Wills on two trips he made south during 1837 and 1840; arithmetic book of Swain Swift Norman and Thomas Joshua Norman; diaries kept by an unknown land official in Florida in the spring of 1855 and winter of 1855-1856; and a volume of poetry by Wills, 1833-1849.

Travel diaries, William H. Wills, 1837, 1840, 1837, 1840

Document Case 5 folder 65

Scope and Contents

Wills travelled in April 1837 into South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. His diary, 32 pages, describes travel conditions and towns visited, including Society Hill, S.C., and Columbia, Augusta, Hawkinsville, and Bainbridge, Ga. Wills commented on churches he attended along his route and on people he met or visited. Enclosed with the diary are accounts, 5 April-12 June, of trip expenses and a map of his route.

In 1840, Wills travelled through Maryland and Pennsylvania to the Ohio River and then south by steamboat through Ohio, Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky, and down the Mississippi River through Missouri and Tennessee and into Arkansas. He then crossed Mississippi into Alabama. The 35-page diary, kept between 1 April and 4 May, has entries similar to those for 1837 and includes descriptions of Cincinnati, Louisville, Helena, Ark., Vicksburg, Jackson, Columbus, and Mobile. Of note are comments on

Wills's inability to collect debts owed the estate of Spencer Cotten and the devastating effects of overspeculation on the Mississippi economy. Included is a summary of his travel agenda.

Diaries, unidentified, 1855-1856, 1855-1856

Document Case 5 folder 66

Scope and Contents

Diaries kept by an unidentified land office official in Florida. The first, 16 pages, has entries between 22 January-3 February 1855 made on a trip to Key West, Fla., and Biscayne Bay (Miami), Fla. The diary describes in detail the physical and social landscape of the towns. Key West entries discuss shipwrecks, vegetation, social life, social class structure, church membership, conflicts between sailors and local residents, and the author's daily activities, especially reading. Entries made 25-28 January when the author sailed from Key West to Miami, discuss life aboard ship and his reading. Entries, 28 January-3 February, describe the vegetation, crops, geology, people, soldiers, and industry of Miami and the surrounding area.

The second diary, 22 pages, has entries made between 24 December and 13 February 1856 in Tampa. Written in the form of a long epistle to "My dear R.," the diary focuses primarily on conflicts with the Seminole people. The author expressed his opinions freely on local attitudes toward the Seminole people, land grabbing and forced Seminole removal, public meetings to raise a volunteer militia, and attacks by the Seminole. His entries provide insight into local social structure, including ethnic conflicts within the town. Visitors to the land office and their business are also recorded.

Arithmetic book and enclosures, 1850, 1856 and undated, 1850, 1856

Document Case 5 folder 67 -- 68

Scope and Contents

Includes 47 pages of mathematical problems worked out by Swain Swift Norman in 1850 and his brother Thomas Joshua Norman in 1856, while they attended boarding school in Alexandria, Va. The remaining 12 pages pertain to Thomas Norman's school life at Lynchburg College in Virginia, and include translations, notes, maxims for living, and poems. Of note is a copy of a letter from Lycurgus G. Matthews to Thomas Norman et al. concerning his election as a member of the Cliosophic Literary Society. Also of interest are compositions entitled "A True Man" and "Ambition." Two enclosures, both undated, are notes on prosody and a brief sketch of Thomas and Swain Norman.

"Poetry on Several Occasions," William H. Wills, 1833-1849, 1833-1849

Document Case 5 folder 69

Scope and Contents

"Poetry on Several Occasions" is a compilation of poems Wills wrote between 1833 and 1849 in the albums of young women. Many of the poems in this 36-page volume are on religious subjects.

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5. Other Items, 1864, 1901 and undated., 1864, 1901

Physical Description: 10 items

Scope and Contents

Genealogical notes on the Whitaker and Wills families; an indenture; biographical sketches of William H., Richard H., and Lt. George Whitaker Wills; and a memorial written for George (1842-1864) by Reverend John Paris. A typed transcription of the memorial also appears. Additional items are clippings, 1901, concerning the raising of a monument in Charleston to poet Henry Timrod.

Other items, 1864, 1901 and undated, 1864, 1901

Document Case 5 folder 70

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6. Pictures, undated.

Physical Description: 1 item

Scope and Contents

Cased tintype of George Whitaker Wills at about age 18, circa 1860. Additional information on the image appears in the folder with the tintype.

Tintype, undated

Special Format Box 11 Special
Format Image SF-P-792/1

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7A. Travel Journals, Sermon Notes, Pictures, and Other Papers, 1851-1993 and undated (Addition of April 2011), 1851-1993

Physical Description: 200 items

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Acquisitions information: Accession 101418

Scope and Contents

Includes three bound travel journals and several hundred pages of undated sermon notes. The journals, covering 1851-1856 and 1866-1882, document Wills's activities as a Methodist Protestant circuit rider in North Carolina, including date and location of services, a selected biblical passage, and the general topic for the sermon. Locations include Bethesda, Harmony, Union, Corinth, Eden, Marsh Chapel, and others. However, it is unclear whether these are the names of towns or congregations where he visited. Sermon notes, some written on envelopes, include a biblical passage followed by detailed exegesis of

the passage with references to related texts and Wills's own thoughts and interpretation. There are also scanned photographs and documents relating to Wills and Whitaker family members and a Whitaker family history.

Processing Information:

Processing Information

Original file titles have been retained for items in Digital Folders (DF-792/1-3).

Travel journal, 1851-1856	Document Case 6 folder 72a
Travel journal, 1866-1878	Document Case 6 folder 72b
Travel journal, 1879-1882	Document Case 6 folder 72c
Sermon notes, undated	Document Case 6 folder 73 -- 75

Pictures, circa 1850-1900, 1993

[Pictures, circa 1850-1900, 1993](#)

Scope and Contents

Scanned images of daguerreotypes, tintypes, cabinet cards, and other images of Wills family members. There are a few images of Whitaker family members' headstones and an image of bride and groom, Martha Whitaker and David Jones, posing at the Strawberry Hill plantation house, 1993.

Whitaker family history

[Whitaker family history](#)

Scope and Contents

27-page word processed document.

Other papers, 1802-1862 and undated

[Other papers, 1802-1862 and undated](#)

Scope and Contents

Includes images of family Bible pages, genealogy notes, a cross-stich pattern of the Strawberry Hill plantation house, and other items.

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