Indiana Historical Society - Manuscripts & Archives

Daniel R. Bearss Collection
1800-1908

Collection #’s:
M0002
OM360

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Processed by
Alexandra S. Gressitt
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USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1.5 manuscript boxes

COLLECTION DATES: inclusive 1800-1908; bulk 1835-1864


REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: M586 A. A. Cole Papers; M682 Daniel R. Bearss Miami Indian Claims

ACCESSION NUMBERS: 70.0309; 81.0412; 96.0463

NOTES: This is an artificial collection. Materials in accession numbers 70.0309 and 81.0412 were previously processed and catalogued as SC70.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Daniel R[oberts] Bearss, merchant, farmer, businessman, and politician was born 23 August 1809 in Geneseo, Livingston County, New York, the son of Truman and Sabrina [Roberts] Bearss. With his family he migrated westward to Plainville, Clermont County, Ohio (1811) then to Detroit, Michigan (1815) before settling in Indiana in 1828.

In 1828 he entered the employ of W. G. and G. W. Ewing, Fort Wayne, Allen County, Indiana, who were engaged in trade with Indians. (W[illiam] G[iffith] Ewing married Esther Bearss, sister of Daniel R. Bearss). Soon after joining the Ewing firm, a branch trading house was opened in Logansport, Cass County, Indiana where Bearss worked until 1832, when he opened his own mercantile business in Goshen, Elkhart County, Indiana (1832-1834). On 14 January 1834 he married, in Goshen, Emma A. Cole, a daughter of Judge Albert Cole.

The following August, moving to Peru, Miami County, Indiana (1834) he formed a partnership with his father-in-law for general merchandising business. This partnership ended after a year and Bearss continued on his own until 1844 when he formed another partnership with Charles Spencer. After five years operating under the name of Bearss and Spencer, Bearss retired from the mercantile business to devote time to his large real estate holdings which included two farms and the Broadway Hotel in Peru, business interests including directorships of the Indianapolis, Peru and Chicago Railroad and the Wabash Railroad and political activities. Bearss held many local political positions, including those of school commissioner and Miami County Commissioner (1840). He was a Whig and a Republican member of the Indiana House of Representatives, 1841-1844, and the Indiana State Senate, 1855-1857; 1861-1863, 1875-1877. In 1856 he served as a delegate to the Republican National Convention.

Daniel and his wife Emma had eight children: George Russel (1834-?); William E.; Albert Cole (1838-1907); Oliver J.; Homer D. (printed sources)/Omer Daniel (family source); Frank W.; Emma, who married Charles J. S. Kumler; and Ella. Daniel died, 18 April 1884, in Hot Springs, Arkansas and is buried in Ridgeview Cemetery, Peru, Indiana.


History of Miami County, Indiana (1887), pp. 394-6.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This is an artificially created collection of business, political and personal papers of Daniel R[oberts] Bearss. While materials in this collection span the years 1800-1908, the bulk of the papers are from the period 1835-1864. The collection includes business correspondence sent and received by Bearss (largely Indiana, Ohio, and New York) and business and legal documents such as invoices, bills, receipts, checks, accounts, bonds, audits, deeds, contracts and other real estate transactions, a marriage dissolution (Sarah Spacht), indentures, powers of attorney, articles and memoranda of agreements, despositions, catalogues and bills such as the Niconza Nursery, in Miami County, Box 1, Folder 19. An early letter, 15 April 1839, seeks potters ware from a Mr. Ball. Political correspondence in the collection relates to activities of the state legislature, Whig and Republican Party Affairs (including the Miami County Central Fremont Club, Box 2 folder 2) and Bearss' business interests, particularly his claims against the Potawatomi, Ottowa, Chippewa and Miami Indians (1841-1861). Included in this group are letters to him from Northern Indiana merchants written while he was lobbying in Washington, D.C. for payment of the merchants' claim against the Indians (1842). Other political activity represented in the collection includes solicitations for potential appointments such as that by E. Whitten, 31 October 1860, for State Librarian (an itinerant Methodist Minister no longer able to travel and seeking a way to support his family (Box 2 folder 5) and school district petitions (Box 2 folder 14). There is also correspondence from John Defrees (1859, Box 2 folder 4) concerning the Indianapolis
Daily Atlas.

Personal correspondence represented in this collection largely concerns family, their travels and business activities. Various family members travelled out to California. One letter home (1850, Box 1 folder 21) includes the passage "California is not the California that it is cracked up to be, thousands of men are here who are making board. Should any of our friends speak of coming to California advise them to by all means to stay at home more especially men of families." Another letter, 15 December 1854, (Box 2 folder 1) details the theft of a mule and $5800. Among the more interesting family papers is a series of letters relating to the arrest, trial, conviction and appeal on murder charges of Charles W. Bearss, a brother of Daniel, 1857, (Box 2 folders 3-4). Other letters include some from a son who worked at the Northern Indiana Prison. In Box 1 folder 1 are four documents--all summons to courts in New York 1800, 1808. Although the family migrated from New York to Indiana, the significance of these documents is unknown.

Correspondents or individuals with whom there were legal transactions includes:

L. D. Adkinson (California); Reuben Armentrout; John Baker; Albert Cole Bearss (son); Charles W. Bearss (brother); Emma A. Bearss (wife); Ephraim Bearss; George R. Bearss (son); Oliver J. Bearss (son); Truman Bearss; William E. Bearss (son); W. G. Bearss (nephew); Samuel Benner; Louis B. Berthelet; James I. Boswell (Attorney, Philadelphia Pa.); Stephen Bradley; Richard L. Britten; George T. Brown; J.C. Burnett; M. M. Rayburn Coe; A.A. Cole (see also M 586); James D. Cole; Schuyler Colfax (see also M 55); Thomas R. Chapman; James M. Defrees; John D. Defrees; John Douglass; James W. Edwards; Esther Ewing (wife of Geo. W. Ewing); George W. Ewing; Harriet Ewing; James M. Flagg; Samuel Glass; Francis Godfroy; W. C. Green; C. S. Hillyers (California); S. C. Hood (Mrs. William N.); William Jenkins; A. Johnson (Reverend); Asa Johnson; J. Johnson (California); Solomon Jones; Charles H. Knox; John C. and Sarah Kratzer; Francis and Catherine La Fountain; Allen Latham; Justic Lockwood (California); E. P. Loveland; Nathaniel McGuire; H. Mendenhall; Ira Mendenhall; John Misener; O.P. Morton; Philip Parcels; John Upfold Pettit; Eli Pugh; A. Road; Nathan O. Ross; Mary Runyan; John W. Saunders; K. Shryock; John C. Sivey; Caleb B. Smith (see also SC 1359); Sarah Spacht; Charles Spencer; James Storey; Madison Sweetser; Ephraim Taylor; Elisha Tipton; Thomas Tipton; A.C. Truax; E. Whitten; Andrew Williams; John S. Winters; Prudence Winters; J.T. Wright; Benjamin Young; Elizabeth Young; Jacob Young; John C. Young; Nancy Young; William B. Young.

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**BOX AND FOLDER LIST**

**Box 1: 1800-1853**

Folders

1 1800-1808

2 1830

3 1835

4 1836 (see also OM 360, folder 1)

5 1837-1838

6 1839

7 January-June 1840

8 July-August 1840
11 1901, 1908
12 n.d., Invoices and Claims
13 n.d., Plats (see also OM 360, folder 3)
14 n.d., Legal and Political (see also OM 360, folder 4)

CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Bearss, Daniel R., 1809-1884
SUBJECT ENTRIES: Bearss, Daniel R., 1809-1884
Republican Party (ind.)
Whig Party (Ind.)
Merchants--Indiana--Peru
Indian traders--Indiana
Politicians--Indiana--Peru
Real property--Indiana--Miami County
Indians of North America--Claims against--Indiana
Indiana--Politics and government
Miami County (Ind.)--History--Sources
Peru (Ind.)--History--Sources
ADDED ENTRIES: Sweetser, Madison, 1809-1875
Winters, John S.
Cole, A. A. (Alphonso Albert), 1818-1862
Colfax, Schuyler, 1823-1885
Defrees, John D. (John Dougherty), 1810 or 11-1882)
Ewing, George Washington, 1803-1866
Godfroy, Francis, 1788-1840
Lafontaine, Francis, 1810-1847
Morton, Oliver P. (Oliver Perry), 1823-1877
Smith, Caleb B. (Caleb Blood), 1808-1864