

# Daniel R. Bearss Collection

## 1800-1908

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Collection #'s:

M0002

OM360

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Processed by  
Alexandra S. Gressitt  
November 1996

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### USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1.5 manuscript boxes

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

PROVENANCE: Walter R. Benjamin (Charles Hamilton Sale, 12 March 1970, Lot #46), New York; Timothy H. Bakken, Clarendon Hills, IL., 1981; Davies Auctions (Sale 12, June 1966, Lot #12), Lafayette, Indiana.

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 HOLLDINGS: 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.

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## 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, Cleremont 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[riffith]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.

Sources: A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly, Vol. 1, pp. 19, 122.

Bodurtha, Arthur L., History of Miami County, Indiana, pp. 88, 158-9, 511-13.

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

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## 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, Ottawa, 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

9 September-December 1840

10 January-June 1841

11 July-December 1841

12 January-May 1842

13 June-December 1842

14 June-August 1843

15 September-December 1843

16 1844-1845

17 1846

18 1847

19 1848 (see also OM 360, folder 2)

20 1849

21 1850

22 January-April 1851

23 May-December 1851

24 1852

25 1853

**Box 2: 1854-1908; undated**

Folders

1 1854-1855

2 1856

3 1857

4 1858-1859

5 1860

6 1861

7 1862-1863

8 1864

9 1879

10 1881, 1885-1887

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)

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## 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

END