

## MSS. Collection #62

### Donnell Family Papers, 1769-1975. 1/2 box (33 folders), ca. 80 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

### INTRODUCTION

The Donnell Family Papers document **four generations of land purchases, financial transactions, and social life in a prominent Guilford County/Greensboro family of the late 18th and 19th centuries.** The collection is notable for several 18th century Guilford County deeds, a bill of sale for a slave (1796), and 19th century printed materials related to various important Guilford County/Greensboro institutions, businesses and families.

**Arrangement:** The Donnell Family Papers are arranged into eight series and, within series, materials are arranged alphabetically. The series are: **Correspondence**, 1839-1975; **Genealogical**, nd; **Legal**, 1769-1869; **Misc.**, nd; **Photos**, ca. 1880; **Printed**, 1817-80; **Receipts**, 1836-66; and **School Documents**, 1875.

Note: This collection also includes a small *Polyglott Bible* which belonged to Rachel Donnell (1975.136.40). This item is located in the book collection.

**Provenance:** Numerous accession numbers are associated with this collection: 1968.275....., 1968.277....., 1970.168....., 1970.279....., 1971.197....., 1973.263....., 1975.136....., 1976.3.3, 1979.161....., and 1981.184.... Most of these materials were donated by the following: Mr. Preston D. Callum, Mrs. Mary Louise Donnell Deal, Mrs. Dave Garvin, Jr., Mrs. Rachel Donnell Forbes, Mr. A. Earl Weatherly, Mrs. Charles Van Noppen White, and Mrs. Dabney White. One item, a slave document, was purchased from Barry Smith in 1979.

**Processing:** This collection was organized and the finding aid prepared by J. Timothy Cole, June 1996.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

As noted above, the Donnell Family Papers span four generations of a prominent Guilford County/Greensboro family. The family's origins can be traced to **Robert Donnell II** (? -1778), who settled in the "**Nottingham Colony**" on **Buffalo Creek** in 1771. His son, **Major Robert Donnell** (1766-1847), would eventually attain considerable prominence, owning extensive lands and serving in the State legislature in 1817 and 1819. The Major's first wife was **Jennie Morrison** (1790-1816) of Philadelphia, by whom he fathered one son, **Washington Donnell**. Arnett mentions Washington Donnell, who was a student of Dr. David Caldwell, Jr., and who eventually, became a doctor. Major Donnell's second wife was **Nancy McCabe Latta** (1788-1841) of Hillsborough, NC. He fathered six children by her: **Jane** (1822-1858), **Sarah**, **Rachel**

(1824-1889), **Robert C.** (? -1870), **George** (? -1915) and **Nancy**. The Major drowned in the Haw River near Hillsborough on March 31, 1847. His large estate, which included four plantations and twenty-three slaves, was divided between his children. (Note: Carroll holds that there were eleven children.)

Information about Major Donnell's children is scant, though in reference to the "**old Van Noppen place**" (located on the corner of Gaston and Eugene streets) Arnett notes that the home had formerly been owned by George Donnell, a nephew of W.A. Caldwell and likely a son of Major Donnell.

**Biographical Sources:** Biographical information on the Donnell family can be found in: Karen Cobb Carroll's *Windows to the Past: Primitive Watercolors From Guilford County, North Carolina, in the 1820s*, Greensboro: The Greensboro Historical Museum, 1983, p. 22; and Ethel Stephens Arnett's *Greensboro, North Carolina: The County Seat of Guilford*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955, pp. 283, 344.

### SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

Types of materials in this collection include **genealogical charts, correspondence, bills of sale and deeds, photos, certificates, clippings, invitations, programs, receipts, U.S. patents and school documents.**

Researchers interested in **early deeds** associated with Guilford County will find a number of interesting items. Several deeds in the collection (1809-29) appear to be for lands owned by Major Donnell (3:3-6). Other deeds (1793-1817, 3:6-7) are associated with **Samuel E. Donnell**, who was probably a brother of the Major, and a very early (1769) Rowan County deed (4:8) is for a conveyance involving **Thomas and James Donnell**, possibly brothers of Robert Donnell II.

Other interesting documents include a 1796 **bill of sale for a slave** (3:1), and a **U.S. patent for a corn sheller** invented by Samuel E. Donnell (6:14); it was granted in 1833.

A tintype photograph (5:1) in the collection is probably an image of George Donnell, one of the Major's sons, and a number of receipts in the collection (7:1) bear the same name. Other materials in the collection also relate to the Major's children: such as the **Bible** (1847) of Rachel Donnell (filed in the book collection), the 1869 **will of Robert C. Donnell** (3:12) and **ca. 1840 invitations** to Jane Donnell (1:2; 6:6,7,9,10).

Still other materials are associated with the children of Jane Donnell (1822-58), the Major's daughter. These include ca. 1860 invitations to one daughter, Annie (6:4,5), and receipts from **W.C Porter & Co. of Greensboro** (1873) for another daughter named Ella (6:13). A large group of receipts bearing the name Latham Donnell (7:1) is also present, as are invitations and receipts for Arthur C. Donnell (1:2, 8:1), though the place of these individuals in the Donnell family genealogy is unclear.

## SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

### 1. Correspondence. 2 folders (12 items). 1839-1975.

A letter (1975) from **Mary Louise Deal** (Mrs. Robert B. Deal) to **William J. Moore**, Director of the Greensboro Historical Museum, can be found in folder 1:1. Mrs. Deal mentions her work on a pamphlet relating to Major Robert Donnell as well as Donnell Family artifacts in her possession. Folder 1:2 holds a collection of **handwritten invitations** (1839-77). Names associated with this group include **Arthur Donnell**, **Jennie Scales**, **Jane W. Donnell**, and **Nancy Gillespie**.

### 2. Genealogical. 1 folder (2 items). nd.

Included in 2:1 are two **genealogical charts** for the Donnell family. One was prepared on legal-sized notebook paper, the other on a "Pedigree Chart", copyrighted in 1936.

### 3. Legal. 11 folders (11 items). 1769-1869.

Except for a slave document, this series consists of a group of mainly Donnell Family deeds. The Guilford County **slave document** (1796, 3:1) is a bill of sale for one **Comfort** (of unspecified sex) for forty-five pounds, sold by **Mary Donnell** to **William Brown**. Folder 3:8 includes a colonial **Rowan County deed** (1769); it is for a conveyance of land [located on North Buffalo (Creek?)] from Thomas Donnell to James Donnell, possibly brothers of Major Robert Donnell. There are several other 18th century deeds in the collection (3:6,9,10), which are Guilford County conveyances to **John Larkin** and Samuel Donnell. Folders 3:3-5 (1809-1829) include deeds which refer to Robert and George Donnell, and included in folder 3:12 is the will of Robert C. Donnell (1869).

### 4. Misc. 1 folder (1 item). n.d.

This series consists of a roughly 2x2 inch **seal** for the **State of North Carolina**, probably detached from the deed in 3:10 (1790).

### 5. Photos. 1 folder (1 item). ca. 1880.

The lone item in this series is a **tintype of George Donnell** (ca.1880).

### 6. Printed. 14 folders (ca. 20 items). 1817-80.

There are a number of interesting printed invitations in the series: 6:3 is an invitation to the **Benbow House** (1871); 6:4 is an invitation to **Blandwood** from Mr. and Mrs. **Eugene Morehead** (nd); an invitation for **Lenox Castle**, Rockingham County (1837), is included in 6:6; folder 6:7 includes an invitation to Raleigh for the **North Carolina State Capital** and **Gaston Rail Road** celebrations of 1840; an invitation for a "picnic excursion" from Greensboro to Kernersville is included in 6:8 (1873); an invitation to a ball at the **University of North**

**Carolina** is included in 6:9 (1840); finally, 6:10 includes an invitation to the **Village Hotel** of Greensborough (1836).

The first folder in this series (6:1) includes a stock certificate for the **Bank of the United States** (1817). A printed program for **Oak Ridge Institute** (1880) is found in 6:11. Printed receipts for the Benbow House and W.C. Porter & Co. (1873) may be found in 6:12-13.

A U.S. **patent** (1833) issued for a corn sheller developed by Samuel E. Donnell may be found in 6:14. It includes the signatures of **Andrew Jackson** and **R.B. Taney**.

#### **7. Receipts. 1 folder (ca. 25 items). 1836-66.**

A one-folder series (7:1) of about 25 receipts (mostly manuscript) is for a great variety of transactions including payment of taxes and Confederate bonds, purchases of household goods and legal bills. Among the names which will be found in the collection are: **Robert Dick, George Donnell, Nancy P. Donnell, Latham Donnell, Daniel E. Albright, David Wyrick, William Hinds, James (?) A. Caldwell, Isaac Thacker (?), James D. Gilchrist, John C. Donnell, and Washington Donnell.**

#### **8. School documents. 1 folder (8 items). 1875.**

This one folder series (8:1) consists of holographic **copies of maps** of the United States and other countries, probably drawn by a schoolboy. They are signed **A.C. Donnell** and dated 1875.

**FOLDER LISTING****Series Folder Contents**

|   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | 1  | Corresp. -- Deal, Mrs. Robert B. (1975)                     |
|   | 2  | " -- Invitations (1839-77, nd)                              |
| 2 | 1  | Genealogical -- Donnell Family (nd)                         |
| 3 | 1  | Legal -- Bills of sale -- Slave (1796)                      |
|   | 2  | " -- Deeds -- Donnell, Emily (1838)                         |
|   | 3  | " -- " -- " , Robert (1809)                                 |
|   | 4  | " -- " -- " , " (1824)                                      |
|   | 5  | " -- " -- " , " (1829)                                      |
|   | 6  | " -- " -- " , Samuel (1793)                                 |
|   | 7  | " -- " -- " , Samuel E. (1817)                              |
|   | 8  | " -- " -- " , Thomas (1769)                                 |
|   | 9  | " -- " -- " , " (1769)                                      |
|   | 10 | " -- " -- Larkin, John (1783)                               |
|   | 11 | " -- " -- " , " (1790)                                      |
|   | 12 | " -- Wills -- Donnell, Robert C. (1869)                     |
| 4 | 1  | Misc. -- Seals -- State of North Carolina (nd)              |
| 5 | 1  | Photos -- Donnell, George (ca. 1880)                        |
| 6 | 1  | Printed -- Certificates -- Bank of the United States (1817) |
|   | 2  | " -- Clippings (nd)   |
|   | 3  | " -- Invitations -- Benbow House (1871)                     |
|   | 4  | " -- " -- Blandwood (nd)                                    |
|   | 5  | " -- " -- Gray, Mr. & Mrs. J.A. Gray (1860?)                |
|   | 6  | " -- " -- Lenox Castle (1837)                               |
|   | 7  | " -- " -- NC State Capital Celebration (1840)               |
|   | 8  | " -- " -- Sergeant, George S. (1873)                        |
|   | 9  | " -- " -- UNC Ball (1840)                                   |
|   | 10 | " -- " -- Village Hotel (1836)                              |
|   | 11 | " -- Programs -- Oak Ridge Institute (1880)                 |
|   | 12 | " -- Receipts -- Benbow House (1873)                        |
|   | 13 | " -- " -- W.C. Porter & Co. (1873)                          |
|   | 14 | " -- U.S. patent -- Corn sheller (1833)                     |
| 7 | 1  | Receipts (1836-66)  |
| 8 | 1  | School documents -- Maps -- Donnell, A.C. (1875)            |

**Index to the Donnell Family Papers (1769-1975)**

Note: The numbers following the name/subject entry -- e.g. 1:1 -- indicate in which Series#:Folder# (or, if no ":", Series only) that name/topic can be found. Dates of the items are given in parentheses for an individual Series/Folder or, if at the end, for the entire subject/name entry. The abbreviation GSO indicates a Greensboro association.

**Albright, Daniel E.:** 7:1 (1856)

**Bank** of the United States (GSO): 6:1 (1817)

Benbow House (GSO): 6:3,12 (1871-73)

Blandwood: 6:4 (nd)

Boon, C.A.: 7:1 (1860-62)

**Deal, Mrs. Robert B.:** corresp., 1:1 (1975)

Dick, Robert: 7:1 (1866)

Donnell, Arthur C.: 1:2 (ca. 1875); 6:11 (1880); 8:1 (1875)

Donnell, Annie: 6:4-5 (ca. 1860)

Donnell, Ella: 6:13 (1873)

Donnell, Emily: 3:2 (1838)

Donnell, George: photo, 5:1 (ca. 1880); 6:12 (1873); 7:1 (ca. 1865)

Donnell, James: 3:8-9 (1769)

Donnell, Jane: 1:2 (1839); 6:6-7,9-10 (1837-40)

Donnell, Latham: 7:1 (1849-66)

Donnell, Mary: 3:1 (1796)

Donnell, Nancy P.: 7:1 (ca. 1860)

Donnell, Robert: 3:3-5 (1809-29)

Donnell, Robert C.: 3:12 (1869)

Donnell, Samuel E.: 3:6-7 (1793-1817); 6:14 (1833)

Donnell, Thomas: 3:8-9 (1769)

Donnell, Washington: 7:1 (1836)

**Gaston** Rail Road Celebration: 6:7 (1840)

Genealogical: Donnell Family, (nd)

Gilchrist, James D.: 7:1 (1857)

Gray, Mr. & Mrs. J.A. Gray: 6:5 (1860?)

**Hinds, William:** 7:1 (1857)

**Larkin, John:** 3:10-11 (1783-90)

Lenox Castle (Rockingham County): 6:6 (1837)

Lindsay, Jesse M.: 7:1 (1864)

**Morehead, Mr. & Mrs. Eugene:** 6:4 (nd)

**Oak Ridge Institute** (Guilford County): 6:11 (1880)

**Rockingham** County, NC (Lenox Castle): 6:6 (1837)

**Sergeant**, George S.: 6:8 1873)

Scott & Scott (Guilford County?): 7:1 (1866)

Simpson, F.L.: 7:1 (1859)

Slavery: bill of sale, 3:1 (1796)

State Capital Celebration (NC): 6:7 (1840)

**Thacker**, Isaac: 7:1 (1857)

**U.S.** patent: corn sheller, 6:14 (1833)

University of North Carolina: dance, 6:9 (1840)

**Village** Hotel (GSO): 6:10 (1836)

**Watson**, Fannie: 7:1 (1866)

Weatherly, Andrew: 7:1 (1857)

Wyrick, Daniel: 7:1 (1858)

**Young**, W.W.: 7:1 (186?)