

Kent, James Randal, Papers

James Randal Kent Papers
1825-1887



Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.1987.031

Unit Date

1825-1887

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

James Randal Kent (1792-1867) was an enslaver, landowner, and farmer in Montgomery and Pulaski counties, Virginia. The collection includes court records, correspondence, titheables to the Sheriffs of Montgomery and Pulaski counties, photographs, court summons, a letter, and other notes concerning Kent's property (Kentland), his business affairs, and estate.

Creator

Kent, James Randal, 1792-1867

Extent

0.4 Cubic Feet 1 box

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Source of Acquisition

The collection was donated to Special Collections and University Archives over several accruals from 1987 to 1990.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the James Randal Kent Papers was completed in 2001.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], James Randal Kent Papers, Ms1987-031, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

James Randal Kent was born on October 23, 1792, to Joseph and Margaret McGavock Kent in Virginia. He married Mary Cloyd Kent, the daughter of Gen. Gordon and Elizabeth McGavock Cloyd. Gordon Cloyd left a tract of land along the New River know as Buchanan's Bottom to Mary and James. They moved there and lived at first in the old Trigg house. Later, they built Kentland mansion, which stands to this day. James and Mary Kent had five daughters, Elizabeth Cloyd, born 1819, Sarah James, born 1822, Mary Louisa, born 1824, Cynthia, born 1827, and Margaret Gordon, born 1840.

James Randal Kent was an enslaver, landowner, and farmer in Montgomery and Pulaski counties, Virginia. He also held several minor public offices including Sheriff of Montgomery County from 1822 to 1823 and served as a Justice and a land surveyor. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Kent bought up land; he owned around 8,000 acres in 1860. In 1855, construction began on a resort at Montgomery White Sulphur Springs, a hotel that later served as a hospital during the American Civil War. In 1860, James Randal Kent became a founder of the Preston and Olin Institute, a Methodist school in Blacksburg that was the predecessor to present day Virginia Tech. He was among the wealthiest men in Montgomery County with an estimated wealth of \$196,000.

During the Civil War, Kent was a staunch supporter of the Confederacy and slavery, and he enslaved more than 100 people at the start of the war. He served as an organizer for the Confederate Army, as well as a supplier of foodstuffs, providing grain and beef to the Confederate Army all the way up to the day Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox in 1865. Though Kentland survived the war, many barns and out-buildings were burned, including the plantation office with the majority of Kent's personal papers, and in 1867 his land was valued at 41% less than it had been in 1860. James Randal Kent died on May 29, 1867.

Scope and Contents

The collection includes court records, correspondence, titheables to the Sheriffs of Montgomery and Pulaski counties, photographs, court summons, and other notes concerning Kent's property (Kentland), his business affairs, and estate. The collection also includes a letter from Kent at Bank of Blacksburg to William H. MacFarland of Richmond, Virginia.

Related Archival Materials

See the following materials related to the Kent family, which are also at Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives:

Black, Kent, and Apperson Family Papers, Ms1974-003

Elizabeth Kent Adams Papers, Ms1990-045

Bell, Kent, Cloyd, Withrow Family Collection, Ms2008-040

"Whitethorne Photographs of Kentland for Margaret K. Cowan" Photograph Album, Ms2021-020

Francis Bell Letter, Ms2024-088

Keywords

Blacksburg (Va.)

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South

Montgomery County (Va.)

Kent family

Kentland Farm

Existence and Location of Copies

Some of this collection has been digitized and is available online.

Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the James Randal Kent Papers by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/>).

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in chronological order.

Description of Subordinate Components

Kent Papers from Sam Bell

Unit Date 1825-1870

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Scope and Content

A. Original materials

1. Legal documents (1825-1839): four of fines against various members of the Kent family.
2. Tax receipt (1864) for Montgomery County taxes received.

B. Photocopies of original materials

1. Financial records: tax receipts for Pulaski and Montgomery Counties (1849-1870), Confederate Army requisition receipt (1865)
2. Correspondence

Staunton, Va., Francis Bell to Maj. James R. Kent (February 11th, 1833[?]): concerns bad weather during his journey, and debt payment [copy is barely legible].

New River Montgomery, Sallie [?] to Gin [?] (May 1st, 1848): concerns their friendship, her impending marriage, and news of their friends.

[Illegible location], Samuel [?] Brownlee to Francis Bell (November [?] 21st, 1857[?]): concerns cattle and other business transactions [copy is barely legible].

Belle Meade, Susanna to "My kind and affectionate master," (June 3rd, 1862): concerns news about the Franklin relatives, their farm, her delay in returning due to a sick baby, and the death of "Uncle Alek" and Aunt Isabel. [typed transcription]

Spring Dale, to Cousin Sarah (February 6th, 1869): [subject unknown as the copy is barely legible].

Legal Disputes relating to the Cloyd and Kent Estates

Unit Date 1832-1886

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Scope and Content

Includes documentation such as wills, depositions, court decisions, and appeals relating to the legal battles over the Cloyd and Kent estates.

Legal Disputes Relating to the Kent Estate

Unit Date 1856-1881

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Scope and Content

Includes documentation such as court and other legal fees; court suits, responses, and amendments; finances and assets; depositions; summons; commission decrees; copy of Kent will; and accounts of Kent estate assets.

Legal Disputes Relating to the Kent Estate

Unit Date 1869-1887

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Scope and Content

Includes documentation such as court and other legal fees; court petitions, suits, responses, amendments, and judgements; depositions; summons; list of assets of Kent estate; list of judgements against the Kent estate; list of disbursements from Kent estate. [Photocopies and original documents].

Legal Disputes Relating to the Kent Estate

Unit Date 1869-1887

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Scope and Content

Includes documentation such as court and other legal fees; court motions, rulings, and orders; receipts of payments from Kent estate; sale of stock in White Sulfur Springs from Kent estate; summons; accounts of Kent estate assets; lists of judgements against the Kent estate; and lists of disbursements from Kent estate.

Legal Disputes Relating to the Kent Estate

Unit Date 1856-1983

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Scope and Content

Includes documentation such as court and other legal fees; court suits and amendments; depositions; tax list of land in Pulaski County (1866 and 1868); and contemporary correspondence and notes.

Kentland Photographs

Unit Date ca. 1982

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Scope and Content

images of the main house and outbuildings, as well as one of James Randal Kent.

Kentland Farm Historic and Archeological District

Unit Date 1994

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Scope and Content

Kentland Farm Historic and Archaeological District (1994): copy of the National Register of Historic Places documentation for the Kentland Farm.