

Key Family Papers

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1812-1904



Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.1992.044

Unit Date

1812-1904

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

Papers of the Key family of Liberty (Bedford County), Virginia, including four letters from brothers Edward W., Joseph C., and Yelverton P. Key, who served in Company G, 34th Virginia Infantry (aka 4th Virginia Heavy Artillery) during the American Civil War, as well as financial documents (receipts and tax bills) of the interrelated Key and Wheat families.

Creator

Key family

Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Key Family Papers were purchased by Special Collections and University Archives in 1992.

Processing Information

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Preferred Citation

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Biographical / Historical

Yelverton P., Edward W., and Joseph C. Key were among the 13 children of John Bernard Key (1799-1870) and Paulina Carter Overstreet (1804-1885). Records show that all of the brothers were born in Bedford County, Virginia.

Yelverton P. Key was born October 29, 1829. In the 1860 federal census, he appears as a farm laborer, living in the Bedford County home of his parents. On March 3, 1862, he enlisted as a private in Company G, 34th Virginia Infantry (aka 4th Virginia Heavy Artillery). He was later promoted to corporal and was wounded at the Battle of Chester Station. Following the war, he returned to Bedford County and married Nannie B. Freeman (1842-1885) on November 29, 1866; and in 1886, married Nancy Jane Veal. Yelverton P. Key died in Bedford, Virginia on April 11, 1911, and was buried in Suck Spring Baptist Church Cemetery.

Joseph Cephas Key was born May 7, 1841. He appears in the 1860 federal census as a farm laborer, living in the home of his parents. On March 3, 1862, he enlisted in Company G, 34th Virginia Infantry. Records list him in the hospital at Farmville, Virginia, at the end of the American Civil War. Key returned to Bedford County after the war and married Rebecca Jane Beard (1848-1930) on November 26, 1868; the couple would have four children. The 1880 census shows the Keys living and farming in Liberty, Virginia. Joseph C. Key died January 21, 1884, and was buried in Key Family Cemetery, Bedford.

Edward Willoughby Key was born January 17, 1835. He appears in the 1860 federal census as a farm laborer, living in the home of his parents. On December 20 of that year, he married Elizabeth Frances "Fannie" Wheat (1838-1921). The couple would have seven children. Key enlisted in Company G, 34th Virginia Infantry on March 3, 1862. He was captured near Farmville, Virginia, on April 6, 1865, and was released July 1. The 1880 census lists the Keys as farmers residing in Liberty (Bedford County). Edward W. Key died in Bedford County on November 17, 1904, and was buried in Key Family Cemetery.

Forest Davis Wheat, father of Elizabeth Frances Wheat and father-in-law of Edward Willoughby Key, was born in Maryland on December 18, 1800. He married Jane Dooley (1799-1872); the couple would have eight children. By 1850, the Wheats were living in Bedford County, Virginia. Forest Wheat died in Bedford County on September 15, 1864.

Estelle Spencer Key, youngest child of Edward W. and Elizabeth Frances Wheat Key, was born in Bedford County, on September 4, 1884. She married Ira Felix White (1881-1926), a salesman, in Bedford on April 27, 1904; the couple would have two children. The federal census shows the Estelle Key White living in Roanoke, Virginia from 1910 through 1930. Following the death of Ira White, she married Walter Holcomb Howard (1880-1946) on September 28, 1932. She continued to live in Roanoke until her death on September 30, 1955. She was buried in Roanoke.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains papers of the interrelated Key and Wheat families of Liberty (Bedford County), Virginia. Included are four wartime letters written by brothers Joseph, Edward, and Yelverton Key, who served in Company G, 34th Virginia (aka 4th Virginia Heavy Artillery) during the American Civil War. Among these are two letters from Joseph Cephas Key. Writing from camp in Yorktown on April 21, 1861, he discusses mumps and measles in camp and describes recent fighting; on October 26, 1864, he writes from camp near Petersburg, Virginia, mentioning short rations and the exorbitant prices of food ("apples audinary size 4 dollars per dosen, Sogrum 40 dollars per gallon, swet potatoes common sise one dollar a peace ...") and recent shelling. Yelverton P. Key writes from White House (New Kent County), Virginia, on May 29, 1863, discussing regimental movements, camp rations, and a recent regimental election. In a letter written from "the ditches near Petersburg," Virginia, on March 27, 1864, E. [Edward] W. Key mentions recent packages received, nearly being shot while in his tent, and desertions to the enemy. The collection also includes an 1853 letter from Levi Wheat of "Neetsville" [i.e., Neatsville], Adair County, [Kentucky], addressed to Zachariah Wheat & Sons, Liberty, Virginia, noting recent family illnesses and deaths, crop conditions, and the prices of livestock; and inquiring about "the prices of Negroes in your country." Also in the collection are two 1904 letters written by an unidentified person (possibly Ira Felix White) in Bedford County to "Estelle" (probably Estelle Spencer Key White). The collection also includes financial documents (bills and receipts) for Forest Wheat, Zachariah Wheat, Jane Wheat, and E. W. Key. Also included is a leaf containing two orders issued by Bedford County justices of the peace George Kerns and Thomas Sale relating to David Smith in 1812.

Keywords

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
Civil War

Existence and Location of Copies

This collection has been digitized and is available online.

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Description of Subordinate Components

Papers

Unit Date 1815-1896

folder 1