

REGISTER OF THE OLIVER PERRY EARLE RECORDS, 1834-1893

Oliver Perry Earle, 1816-1894

Mss 52, 5.25 cu. ft.

INTRODUCTION

The provenance of these records is unknown, but the Earle family extended from Landrum to Greenville, Anderson, Pendleton, Clemson, and Walhalla, South Carolina. Dr. Samuel Earle (1878-1978), a descendent, Clemson professor and acting president of Clemson on several occasions, may have been the donor of these business records. These account books, daybooks, ledgers, and journals record economic data as well as provide a roster of names of customers, suppliers, and banks in Greenville, South Carolina. This collection was formerly cataloged BC1/+12. This register was prepared by Berniece Holt, Manuscript Curator Specialist, in 1984.

HISTORY

Greenville County was officially opened to settlers in 1784. The settlers came principally from more northern states, sometimes having moved several times in search of cheaper and more fertile lands. From the beginning, Greenville was recognized as a desirable summer resort. Mansions, hotels, and boarding houses soon filled Greenville with the well-to-do of the coast. In 1794 the first store was built by A. McBeth on leased land. In 1805, Captain Jeremiah Cleveland erected a small general mercantile shop, Erwin, Patton, and Cleveland, which expanded until Cleveland made a fortune while Greenville was still a village. Vardry McBee, in 1815, became another prominent land owner even though he was a resident of North Carolina. In 1819 the Greenville Male and Female Academies were established and by 1821 buildings were built and occupied. Slave ownership was slow to come to Greenville but by 1830 wealth, slaves, and cotton had emerged. By 1853 the first railroad was operative which caused land values to rise and small industries to flourish along major streams and falls.

The Earle family from Virginia was one of the first families of Greenville. Members were involved in the early settlement, development, and political life of Greenville and the state. The more prominent members are Samuel, Elias, Baylis J. (Judge and father of Samuel), George W., John, Thomas John, Joseph H. (father of Dr. Baylis H.), T. T., Wilton H., C. B., and Robinson Earle. Thomas John Earle was the father of Oliver Perry Earle, the subject of this Register, and five other sons and four daughters. Their home, "White Columns," Landrum, South Carolina, was a large mansion modeled after Georgian plantations of Charleston and Virginia. Three of Oliver Perry Earle's brothers, Theron, Joe, and Sam, became well-known citizens in the Greenville-Anderson area.

Except for internal evidence and cemetery records little is known about Oliver Perry and his business. He was born September 25, 1816 and died November 4, 1894. He was married to Rachel Catherine (last name unknown) who was born in 1833 and died May 19, 1905. One daughter was born June 25, 1863 but died July 12, 1864. Internal evidence places this general mercantile establishment on Rutherford [Road].

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection includes fourteen original volumes of account books, a cash book, daybooks, journals, and ledgers. Seven of these volumes were transcribed under the auspices of the Historical Records Survey, Division of Women's and Professional Projects, Works Progress Administration, at the University of South Carolina, in 1938. Carbon copies of the transcripts are with this collection. The spelling of the firms' name took several forms, "Earlle," "Bevins," "Bevens," "Bevvins," "Earles and Woodin." This firm transacted, along with others, business with other Earle businesses: Earle and Henning, Robinson and Earle, Theron Earle.

These volumes document the purchasing population in Greenville from 1834-1893. They include not only the individual transactions but also accounts with other business firms of the period. The prices for goods and services are also interesting aspects of this collection. The volumes are in poor condition, thus the carbon typescripts are useful in that half of the original volumes need not be handled in order to know the contents.

For genealogical purposes these volumes can be helpful. There are many transactions with members of the Earle family and other prominent Greenville families and establishments.

Mss 52 Oliver Perry Earle Records

LIST OF VOLUMES

- 1 1834-1835 Earlle and Bevvins Daybook.
original, 315 pp.; also, typed carbon
transcript, 242 pp.
- 2 1834-1836 Earlle and Bevvins Ledger.
original, 458 pp.; also, typed carbon,
299 pp.
- 3 [1834]-1836 [from front of book, "1837"]
Earlle and Bevvins Daybook. unnumbered
and pages have been removed.
- 4 1834-1838 Earlle and Bevvins Journal C.
Numerical list of accounts 1-246 and
daily register of entries in chrono-
logical order, 499 pp.
- 5 1835-1836 Earlle and Bevvins Journal C,
441 pp.
- 6 1835-1836 Earle and Bevens Ledger. 355
pp.
- 7 1836-1837 Earle and Bevens Daybook C.
original, 479 pp.; also, typed carbon,
308 pp.
- 8 1836-1838 Earle and Bevens Ledger C.
559 pp.
- 9 1837 [Bevins Earle and Co.] Daybook.
original, 244 pp. and carbon typescript,
185 pp.
- 10 1837-1838 [Earle and Bevvins and Co.]
Daybook. original, 232 pp.; also,
carbon typescript, 193 pp.
- 11 1838-1839 [Earlle and Bevvins] Daybook.
original, 502 pp.; also, carbon type-
script, 402 pp.
- 12 1838-1841 Bevens, Earle and Co. Daybook A.
pages are unnumbered.
- 13 [1843-1851] 1845-1848 Earles and [Austin]
Woodin's Account Bo[ok]. original,
300 pp.; also, carbon typescript, 219
pp.

LIST OF VOLUMES

14

1876-1893 [Firm name unknown] Cash
account book. 145 pp. Many
transactions are with members of
the Earle family; e. g., Baylis,
Theron, John, L. D., T. J. (tuition
and board for Eliza).