

C Gentry Family, Papers, 1828-1977  
4026 4 linear feet, 1 volume

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## INTRODUCTION

This collection contains the papers of the Gentry family, prominent lawyers in the St. Louis and central Missouri areas. The papers consist of correspondence, photographs, newspaper articles, genealogical documents, certificates, poetry, and miscellaneous materials of the Gentry, Estes, Denny, and Althouse families from 1828 through 1977.

## DONOR INFORMATION

The Gentry Family Papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Virginia M. Botts on March 3, 1980 (Accession No. 2294). Elizabeth Gentry Sayad, made subsequent donations on October, 15, 1981 (Accession No. 2397), August 25, 1995 (Accession No. 3073), February 12, 1998 (Accession No. 5751), March 18, 1999 (Accession No. 5751.01), and December 8, 1999 (Accession No. 5751.02).

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The Gentry family moved to Madison County, Kentucky, from Virginia in 1786. Richard Gentry was born in 1788 in Madison County to Richard Gentry and Jane Harris and was one of nineteen children. The younger Richard Gentry married Ann Hawkins in 1810, served in the War of 1812, and soon after, moved to the Missouri Territory. The family settled in St. Louis County in 1816, where Richard became a Captain in the Missouri State Militia, and later was promoted to Colonel. Because the St. Louis County population was growing fast, Gentry decided to move his family farther west to Old Franklin in Howard County. In 1818, Richard Gentry built the first house in Smithton, Missouri. Three years later, the family moved to Columbia and helped found the town.

He tried his hand at politics and was elected as a state representative. He later held a Senate seat for four years, where he met and became friends with Thomas Hart Benton. He also made three successful trips on the Santa Fe Trail and was named postmaster in Columbia. About 1832, he became a general in the militia. In 1837, Senator Thomas Hart Benton called Gentry into action to raise volunteer troops and assist in abating the Seminole rebellion in Florida. The 1<sup>st</sup> Missouri Volunteers were instrumental in helping to rout the Seminole Indians at Lake Okeechobee, even though their horses were lost in stormy seas en route to Florida. On Christmas Day 1837, Gentry was killed during the battle. After his death, Ann Hawkins Gentry was named postmaster in Columbia, the first woman postmaster in the United States, and held that position for 28 years.

Thomas Benton Gentry, the eleventh of thirteen children of Ann Hawkins and Richard Gentry, was born in 1830. As a clerk in a local merchant's shop, he carefully and frugally learned the business and became a successful merchant in addition to becoming a notary public and justice of the peace. These duties enticed him to practice law. He was also successful in real estate security and loans. In 1860, Gentry married Mary Eliza Todd, the daughter of Roger North Todd. They had three daughters, all of whom died in infancy, and two sons: North Todd Gentry, born in 1866, and William Richard Gentry, born in 1869. Mary Todd Gentry died in

1892 and Thomas remarried Eugenia Babb in 1893. Thomas and Eugenia moved to Kansas City where they remained the rest of their lives.

North Todd and William Richard both attended Columbia schools and graduated from the University of Missouri. North Todd Gentry remained in Columbia and married Ulie Belle Denny, and raised two adopted daughters, Mary and Nadine. See the North Todd Gentry (1866-1944), Papers, 1837-1947, (C0049) for more information.

William Richard Gentry studied languages in Europe in the mid-1890s. He then taught French and German at the University of Missouri and eventually became a prominent St. Louis lawyer. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge and the Four-Minute Men. He married Mary Lee Payne and had one son, William Richard Gentry, Jr., in 1897. Mary Payne Gentry died in 1901. William Richard Gentry, Sr., then married Anna Heindorn, who bore him a second son, Thomas Frederick Gentry.

William Richard Gentry, Jr. served as a member of the American Field Service in France during World War I and in 1923, earned a law degree from the University of Missouri. He married Elizabeth F. Estes in 1924, and they had one daughter, Elizabeth Foster. William Richard Gentry, Jr. followed in his father's footsteps and practiced law in St. Louis.

#### SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Gentry Family Papers consist of correspondence, genealogical and historical documents, photographs, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous materials collected from four related families who lived in Boone and Howard Counties. The collection is arranged by family surname and then by type of material. Chronological order is used within each family series when possible. The collection is arranged into five series: **Gentry Family**, **Estes Family**, **Denny Family**, **Althouse Family**, and **North Todd Gentry**.

The largest series of the collection belongs to the **Gentry Family** and consists of genealogical information on the Gentrys and related families, military documents concerning Richard Gentry and the Seminole War in Florida, a scrapbook containing materials about the family, Athenaeum Society pamphlets, and correspondence between family members at home and abroad. It also contains official documents such as deeds, diplomas, certificates, and photographs. This series also contains newspaper articles about various family members, including a park in Gentry County named for Ann Hawkins Gentry, account books, travel diaries, pamphlets on local events, and postcards.

The **Estes Family** series is comprised of legal papers from A.J. Estes, account books, business and personal receipts, correspondence of the Estes family, Elizabeth Estes' college diploma and a copy of *The Journalist Creed* signed by Walter Williams. It also includes Elizabeth Estes' postcard scrapbook, school work, and the 1918 Christian College yearbook.

The **Denny Family** series contains pages from an 1824 travel diary written in Spanish and English, reportedly found and used by Alexander Denny. This series also includes correspondence, genealogy of the Dennys and related families, poetry, and a copy of the 1896 *Armstrong Herald Pictorial and Biographical Edition*. Newspaper articles about Mary Snoddy Denny's birthdays and family photographs are also included as well as official documents such as Alexander Denny's Oath of Loyalty and captain's commission certificate from the Civil War, and an 1865 travel diary of unknown origins describing a trip from Glasgow, Missouri, by steamboat and train to the east coast and back to Glasgow by way of the Great Lakes.

The **Althouse Family** series contains family photographs and correspondence related to the death of George and Elizabeth Denny Althouse's son, Denny, in 1899.

The **North Todd Gentry** series contains genealogy on the Harris and Todd families; papers written by North Todd Gentry; speeches given on the Gentry, Harris, and Todd families; and an address on Thomas Hart Benton. This series also contains business records, diplomas, account books, court case files, photographs, postcards, Athenaeum Society materials, and a bound volume of radio addresses given by Gentry on Columbia Female Academy, which were broadcast in 1933.

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  - f. 3 Scrapbook: *Gentry Family in America, 1676 to 1909*; newspaper articles, 1967
  - f. 4 Scrapbook: Newspaper articles, reburial of Richard Gentry's remains, 1967
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  - f. 8 William R. Gentry: Addresses, newspaper articles on family history, 1930-1955
  - f. 9 William R. Gentry: *An Old Printing Press; A Six Year Old Boy; A Pioneer Soldier*, 1937; William Richard Gentry, Jr.: *Full Justice*, 1947
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