

Peery Family Papers

The Peery Family Papers consists primarily of correspondence written from the 1820s to the early 1900s. The family moved to northwest Missouri during the early 19th century. Included are letters from John Thompson Peery and his wife Mary Jane Chick Johnson Peery who were at one time affiliated with the Shawnee Indian Mission.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Peery family
Title: Peery family papers
Dates: 1820-1914
Size: 7 boxes, 600 letters
Location: SC40

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

Additional physical form available: Collection photographs have been digitized and selected letters have a typescript and have been photocopied.

Acquisition information: Gift, May 1965, Wilma Peery Garvin and Lenore B. Peery, sisters and daughters of Horace J. and Viola Peery.

Custodial history: These papers were the major part of the donation which also included the Robinson family papers as well as some other miscellaneous items.

Citation note: Peery family papers (SC40), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Collection Description

Biographical/Historical note

The Peery family associated with this collection is that of George Peery and his wife Jane Campbell Thompson Peery, both from Tazewell County, Virginia. They were married in Virginia in 1809 and emigrated to what is now Grundy County, Missouri, in 1835. There were 18 children born to this couple and all but four lived to adulthood. Their names were Henry Thompson, Louisa Bowen, Sarah Evans, William, John Thompson, Archibald, Mary Jane, Narcissa Bowdry, Nancy, Thomas, Reese Bowen Thompson, George Fielding, Virginia Columbus, Emily Wynne, Margaret Elizabeth, Robert Newton, and Elbert Evans. The contents of Box 1 contain items pertaining to this generation of the family.

The rest of the collection centers around the children of Archibald and Elizabeth Peery, living in the northeast Missouri towns of Albany, Edinburg, Jamesport, Cameron, etc., in Grundy County, Gentry County, Clinton and DeKalb Counties. They were named: Horace Jewett, Florence Howe, Nash Andral, Trusten Polk, Mary Campbell, Archibald, Daniel William, and John Thompson. It appears that the collection letters belonged to Horace J. Peery and were saved by him/and or his wife and were passed on to his daughters Lenore and Wilma. Horace Peery was born in 1852 in Grundy County, Missouri, lived most of his life in northwest Missouri and died on April 19, 1910 in Albany, Missouri.

Of particular local interest is the correspondence of John Thompson Peery, a Methodist Episcopal Church, South circuit rider and missionary to the Indians. He lived at the Indian Manual Training School in the late 1840s and at times during the 1850s as well as other places in this area. The first letter written by him in this collection is dated November 18, 1845. There are also letters written by his wife, Mary Jane Chick Johnson Peery, daughter of prominent local figures Col. and Mrs. W. M. Chick.

Family information was obtained from *Peery Families of Virginia, Data Obtained by E. H. Peery and Joseph S. Peery from the Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine, 1917-19*, arranged by Miss Annie Lynch. This publication was apparently given with the collection in 1965 and is available in the book collection, classed as MVSC Q 929.2 P375P. It includes a typescript from the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*, June 1890, which is a tribute to John Thompson Peery upon his death. The Peery family name also appears in published histories of both Gentry and Grundy County, Missouri, available in the Missouri Valley Room. An online copy of Horace Peery's death certificate is located in the collection folder.

Scope and content note

The collection is arranged in chronological order by date of correspondence with undated correspondence located at the end. The first letter is dated March 7, 18[20] from Chariton, Missouri Territory and the last dated item is 1913. Besides correspondence, the collection contains hand written agreements, a slave sale document, a hand written high school record, 12 photographs, receipts, invitations and acceptance notes and other ephemeral type items.

The letters were sent primarily to relatives and reflect on the activities and personalities of the Peery family members primarily through two generations. Most reflect typical 19th century concerns of the day with discussion of the health of the writer and family members, community news, agricultural information, transportation activities, family business concerns, courtship and marriage, the weather, and some political references.

The family came from Virginia and favored the southern cause. Places from which letters were written range from California to Oklahoma to Massachusetts with most being in the Midwest and the state of Missouri. Those letters written by John Thompson Peery mention his church activities and his concern for the lack of religious conviction by some of his family members. He does mention Kansas City but does not give an extensive description of the area. He does mention the Scarritt name also. The few letters written by his wife Mary Jane Peery mention her family and this area.

Besides the Peery name, some of the other last names, either as letter writers or recipients, include: Holman, Robinson, Kirk, Norris, Hamlin, Brookshier, Ordway, Tandy, Campbell, Shuler, Kelley, Glanville, Lewis, Ingalls, Stapleton, Campbell, etc. Beginning with Box 2, the correspondence is primarily addressed to Horace J. Peery, whose father was Archibald Peery, a brother of John Thompson Peery. The letter writers are primarily members of this part of the Peery family.

The strength of the collection includes the correspondence written by John Thompson Peery and his wife Mary Jane. Although brief and not very descriptive, it does give some insights into the Shawnee Indian Mission and early Westport and Kansas City. Archibald and his son Trusten were both physicians and the correspondence concerning them does offer insight into 19th century rural medical practices, prevalent illnesses, medicines of choice, medical

education, etc. Lastly, rural life in northwestern Missouri is portrayed over an extended time through these writings. This is especially true for both Grundy and Gentry counties.

Collection Inventory

Box 1 - Correspondence primarily, March 7, 18[20s] - December 29, 1879, 95 folders (Folders 1-95)

Includes close to 20 letters written either by John Thompson Peery or his wife Mary Jane Peery between the dates of November 18, 1845 - June 22, 1874 and are found in folders 24, 28, 29, 33-35, 37, 41, 55, 62, 71, 80, 83-84, 86-88. Some of these letters include a typescript. Also included are a medical license for John Holman (Folder 2), a slave lease agreement between Narcissa Tandy and J. B. Allen (Folder 32), a letter referencing small pox in Kansas City (Folder 34) and cholera (Folder 36), letter mentioning border warfare conditions in Kansas (Folder 52) and Civil War condition in Missouri (Folder 66, 71).

Correspondence is sent to: Eliza Ann **Holman**, John **Holman**, Mary **Holman**, Archibald **Peery**, Mrs. H. P. **Kelley**, George and Jane **Peery**, James **Robinson**, William **Peery**, Mary **Robinson**, Elizabeth **Kirk**, Reese B.T. **Peery**, H.J. **Tandy**, Fielding **Peery**, J. **Norris**, William **Robinson**, Horace J. **Peery**, etc.

Correspondence is from: Eliza **Ingalls**, L.L. **Shuler**, B.R. **Wardlaw**, Richard **Holman**, William **Campbell**, H.T. **Peery**, Mary **Holman**, William **Parkinson**, James **Robinson**, J.B. **Hamlin**, John Thompson **Peery** and Mary Jane, E.A. **Kirk**, August **Glanville**, Thomas **Brookshier**, J.B. **Lewis**, George **Lewis**, John **Ordway**, William **Peery**, Elizabeth **Peery**, E.A. **Norris**, G.H. **Forkney**, Reese Thompson **Peery**, William D. **Nelson**, G.H. **Stapleton**, Amanda **Fohner**, John **Kirk**, L.A. **Horton**, J.A. **Peery**, Jane C. **Tandy**, Fannie **Ashley**, Tabitha **Smith**, J.W. **Peery**, J.H. **Peery**, etc.

Box 2 - Correspondence primarily, January 4, 1880 - December 20, 1883, 84 folders (Folders 96-180)

The correspondence in this box is addressed almost exclusively to Horace J. Peery who was the son of Dr. Archibald Peery and nephew of Rev. John Thompson Peery. The letter writers are primarily family members of this side of the Peery family and friends. Correspondence from Woodlands, California (Folders 135, 137), relates to that area of the country and letters sent from St. Louis, Missouri, relate to attendance at medical school of Trusten Peery, brother of Horace, and often describe parts of the medical education of the time (Folders 125, 130, 174, 176, 178). There is also a description of Fayette, Missouri, by one who was a student at the college located there (Folders 120, 122). Some brief mention of small pox scares and vaccination and reactions to it are also related (Folder 129) as well as a description of a devastating storm in 1883 (Folder 145).

Box 3 - Correspondence primarily, early 1884 - October 28, 1887, 114 folders (Folders 181-295)

As with the previous box, this box contains correspondence directed primarily to Horace J. Peery or those connected by family to him. There is one letter from John Thompson Peery (Folder 215) and he is mentioned occasionally by members of this side of the family in this correspondence. Nash Peery, a

brother of Horace J. Peery, lived and worked in Washington, D.C., for a while during the 1880s and early 1890s and there are several letters from him while living there.

These letters detail his life in the capitol and reflect some on the politics of the time. He did meet President Grover Cleveland and relates that experience (Folder 293). Both Horace and Nash married during the time period of this box. Another topic mentioned at times is that of the temperance movement. The predominant theme of the letters seems to be the health or lack of it of the family.

Box 4 - Correspondence primarily, January 3, 1888 - December 31, 1889, 91 folders (Folders 296-387)

The letters in this box are primarily addressed to Horace J. Peery and/or his wife Bola. They are sent either by members of Horace's family or by Bola's relatives. It is during this time period that Archibald Peery died, but there is no correspondence concerning this event. There is a letter from John Thompson Peery (Folder 317). Letters from Oklahoma Territory (Folder 350, 358, 359) describe that area at that time and several family members were lured to the area to acquire land and sell claims. Trusten Peery has moved to Yuba City, California, and letters from him are found in Folders 342 and 360. Nash Peery continues to send letters from Washington, D.C.

Box 5 - Correspondence primarily, January 5, 1890 - November 29, 1891, 119 folders (Folders 388 - 506)

The letters in this box are primarily addressed to Horace J. Peery and/or his wife Bola. During this time in late 1890 and into part of 1891, Horace and his brother John took a trip west going to Arizona. There are several letters both to and from them during this trip, starting with folder 477. The trip was made in hopes that the health of Horace would improve. He appears to have suffered from an inflamed throat/tonsils for a long period of time. Horace ventured on to California to see his brother Trusten and wife Lura before traveling back home to Missouri. Also during this time period, on October 1, 1891, Horace and Bola had their first child, a daughter eventually named Lenore.

Other letters have to do with business interests of Horace, happenings in Oklahoma Territory where Horace's brother John Peery had a claim, and news from family members primarily living in northwest Missouri. John Thompson Peery died on June 5, 1891, but there does not appear to be any correspondence concerning that event.

Box 6 - Correspondence primarily, January 10, 1892 - 1913, 85 folders (Folders 507 - 591)

The letters in this box are primarily addressed to Horace J. Peery and/or his wife Bola. Letters received come from his mother, who died in 1896, as well as his sisters and brothers. Correspondence is frequent during 1892, dropping off significantly from then until Horace dies in 1910. Nash A. Peery and his family move to Portland, Oregon, where he is employed as a lawyer. Later letters in this box reflect his financial struggle and problems associated with the death of his wife. Eventually sister Mary Peery moves to this same area after her mother dies. Trusten and Lura Peery remain in Yuba City, California. Others in the family were in Oklahoma and some stayed in Missouri. Horace Peery became circuit clerk and recorder for Gentry County,

Missouri. Although his cause of death is not given, apparently he was experiencing gall bladder problems shortly before his death.

Box 7 - Miscellaneous items, no date, 20 folders (Folders 592-611)

Included within this small box are letters, receipts, essays, a contract, calling cards, a hand written map of the Midwest, a list of medicinal items and the cost, photographs, etc. It does include one faded letter believed to have been written from Kansas City by John Thompson Peery describing the health condition of his wife Mary Jane (Folder 598).

Processed by Special Collections Department Manager Gloria Maxwell, 1992;
additional processing by Special Collections Librarian Sara Nyman, 2004.