

Collection: David Brainard WHITING Reminiscences
c.1861-1916
Raleigh, N.C.; Hamlet, N.C.

Physical Description: 1 manuscript volume of 61 leaves in a black binding; 1 typescript of the manuscript volume in 97 pages; and a typescript supplement in 13 pages.

Acquisition: Gift of Mrs. Mary W. Dorman, Pembroke, N.C., 1994

North Carolina State Archives
Raleigh, North Carolina

Description: David Brainard Whiting (Jan. 8, 1852 - Oct. 31, 1922) was the third son and sixth child of Seymour Webster and Hannah M. (Stuart) Whiting of Raleigh. His father, a descendant of the Whiting and Bradford families of Massachusetts, was born at Stratford, Connecticut in 1816. He moved to Raleigh in 1835, and was brought into the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad as treasurer under George Washington Mordecai, president of the company from 1824 to 1839. Whiting purchased a residence at the southwest corner of Jones and McDowell streets, within a block of the offices and train yards of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, and moved his family there. Young Brainard was only three when his father died and left his widow to raise a family of seven children. He enjoyed a brief childhood marked by the privations of the Civil War and the years following the war, finding as much boyish entertainment among the locomotives and railroad men as in the fields and woods adjacent to the town. After as much formal education in the schools of Mrs. Judge Taylor and Dr. Drury Lacy as the boy could be held to, he began clerking in Raleigh stores to augment the family income. In 1870 he learned telegraphy in the local Western Union offices and took brief fill-in jobs as telegrapher at various depots of both the North Carolina and the Raleigh and Gaston railroads. In 1871 he moved to Wilmington to accept employment as a telegrapher for the Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherford Railroad (the Carolina Central Railroad after 1873). He was briefly employed by the Atlantic Coastline Railroad in 1876 when he was sent as agent and telegrapher to the company's depot in Mount Olive. The following year, however, when the Carolina Central Railroad line was extended to Hamlet, he was offered the agency there and accepted it. Here Whiting served as agent for three of the companies that eventually became constituent elements of the Seaboard Air Line Railway: Carolina Central, Raleigh and Augusta, and Palmetto railroads. Although forced out as agent in 1899, Whiting remained in railroad employ at Hamlet until 1911 when he ended his thirty-year career as a railroad man and moved to McColl, South Carolina.

In retirement, Whiting reflected on his childhood and adult life. He let his mind play on unfair charges that he had contributed to the failure of the bank in Hamlet, and that he had exceeded his authority as agent for the Carolina Central Railroad. He recollected the weaknesses and chicaneries of railroad officials under whom he had worked. After five years of reflection, he decided in 1916 to set his memories down as formal reminiscences for the enjoyment and edification of his children.

Both the reminiscences and the typed supplement to the manuscript contain detailed passages describing Whiting's boyhood in Raleigh, his amusements, and his education, and the supplement contains sketches of members of his family (including the claims of his grandmother, Hannah (Paddison) Stuart, to have been the person who chose the name for President Andrew Johnson at the time of his birth in Raleigh). The basic manuscript contains brief vignettes of Raleigh friends, acquaintances, and relations, including: Henry D. Turner, bookseller and publisher of the almanac that bears his name; Henry D. Coley, Turner's nephew (and Whiting's uncle), who was appointed State Librarian by Governor Holden in 1868; George Washington Mordecai, his father's patron; Joseph W. Holden; and, though unnamed, Governor Thomas Bragg and his sons. Whiting recounts, too, some local events of the Civil War, such as the raising of the Confederate flag in Raleigh upon North Carolina's secession from the union, the opening of C.S.A. army hospitals in Raleigh, the explosion of the Waterhouse and Bowes powder mill on Crabtree Creek, a catastrophic train wreck on the Raleigh and Gaston line near Wake Forest, anecdotes relating to Confederate troops being shipped through Raleigh, and so forth. He gives greater attention to, and a fuller account of, the surrender of Raleigh to Sherman's army, the summary execution of Lt. Walsh (C.S.A.) for firing at General Kilpatrick (U.S.A.) during the hasty retreat of Confederate forces from the town, and Raleigh's occupation by federal troops. Some events of the post-war years in Raleigh are described or touched on: the removal of Confederate dead from various scattered sites to a specially reserved burial ground adjoining Oakwood Cemetery, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan (in which his brother was a leader), the arrest of Randolph A. Shotwell on charges of involvement in the Klan, and confrontations by and with the freedmen.

The greater part of the reminiscences, however, is given over to Whiting's life first at Wilmington then at Hamlet as a railroad man. Included is a description of Hamlet when it was no more than a depot called Short-ridge's Mill, and numerous anecdotes of wrecks, thefts, and investigations, and animadversions on some of the leading men of the constituent companies of the Seaboard Air Line Railway. A section of the reminiscences is devoted to a catalog of wrecks on lines leading to Hamlet during the 1880s and 1890s, and another to a catalog of remarks on individual telegraphers on various North Carolina railroads from the 1870s to the 1890s. Scattered throughout are allusions to Whiting's private life and his family.

Citation to page numbers in the subject cards prepared as part of the finding media for the private collection of manuscripts is to the pages of the typed transcription of the manuscript volume, not to the manuscript volume, itself. All citations to page numbers in the typed supplement are identified as such on the subject cards.

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SUBJECT CARDS:

Bragg, Thomas (Gov.)
Carolina Central Railroad
Civil War
Civil War--Economic Conditions
Civil War--Hospitals
Coley, Henry D.
Confectioners
Confederate Cemetery, Raleigh, N.C..
Education
Fendt, Henry
Fishing
Freedmen
Holden, Joseph W.
Huger, Major [Cleland Kinloch?]
Hunting
Johnson, Andrew (U.S. Pres.)
Ku Klux Klan, 1868-1869
McBee, Vardry A.
Moonshine
Moseley, M. J.
Onderdonk, H. G.
Powder Mills
Race Relations
Railroads
Raleigh and Augusta Air Line Railroad
Raleigh and Gaston Railroad
St. John, Everitte
Sherman's March
Shotwell, Randolph A.
State Librarians
Stuart, Hannah (Paddison)
Taylor, Eliza Leonora
Telegraphers
Train Wrecks
Turner, Henry D.
Walsh, Lt. [Robert?]
Waterhouse & Bowes Powder Mill
Wheeler's Cavalry
Whiting, George Mordecai
Whiting Family
Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherford Railroad
Wood Pigeons

GEOGRAPHIC CARDS:

Hamlet, N.C.
Mount Olive, N.C.
Raleigh, N.C.
Raleigh, N.C.--Race Relations
Wilmington, N.C.--Race Relations

Description by G. Stevenson completed August 23, 1996