

Collection: EDWARD W. PHIFER, JR., COLLECTION
Lincolnton, N. C.
1789, 1842-1895, 1934

P.C. 1368.1

Physical Description: 83 items, consisting of correspondence, business agreements, receipts, promissory notes, partial genealogy, will, poem, commission, minutes, and miscellaneous envelopes.

Acquisition: Gift of Dr. Edward W. Phifer, Jr., Morganton, N. C., December 14, 1967. Accessioned December 28, 1967.

Description: The Edward W. Phifer, Jr., Collection consists of papers of the Avery family of Burke County and the Phifer family of Lincoln County. Dr. Edward W. Phifer, Jr., the donor, is the grandson of George Lowndes and Martha Avery Phifer.

The correspondence of the Avery family includes letters between the parents of Martha Avery Phifer, Clark Moulton and Elizabeth Walton Avery, and several letters from her grandfather, Isaac Thomas Avery. There are also several letters from Martha after she married George Phifer as well as letters from various family friends. The Phifer family material consists mainly of the correspondence of George Lowndes Phifer, his father John Fulenwider Phifer, and his brother-in-law Stephen Smith. Various business instruments are also included in the Phifer Family material.

The Avery family correspondence begins in February, 1842, with a letter from Isaac Thomas Avery (1785-1864) concerning gold mining. Clark Moulton Avery (1819-1864) was involved in a gold mining operation on the Broad River in Rutherford County, and his father was trying to encourage him in his efforts.

Most of the Avery letters were written between May, 1861, and January, 1862. When he first entered the army, Clark Moulton Avery was Captain of Company "G" in the "Bethel Regiment," (11th Regt. N. C. T.) While serving in this company, his letters came from Richmond, Yorktown, and Bethel. In January, 1862, after his original company had left the army, Avery was commissioned a Lieutenant-Colonel, and he assumed the command of the 33rd Regiment, North Carolina Troops. While serving in this command, his letters came from New Bern, except one letter from Richmond dated November 30, 1862, just after his exchange. He had been captured

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in March at New Bern and had spent some time in the prisons on Governor's Island and on Johnson's Island. There are no letters written during his imprisonment, and the letter of November, 1862, does not give any information concerning it.

Although Clark Avery's letters deal to a great extent with family matters, he from time to time mentions the conduct of the men under his command. In May, 1861, he said, "Our men are . . . acting handsomely," and in June, he said the men were ". . . quite cheerful under the many hardships incident to a soldier's life." He speaks of the people leaving the Yorktown area in June, 1861, and of the same thing in New Bern in January, 1862. In January, 1862, he mentions the presence of General Burnside in New Bern--on January 28, 1862, Burnside had about 30 vessels "inside the town," but he describes no actual military plans or engagements.

There are two letters in the collection concerning Avery--one in 1864 discussing the wounds Avery had received and one in 1869 returning some of Avery's papers to his family. For biographical information on Clark Moulton Avery as well as Isaac Thomas Avery, see Samuel A. Ashe (ed.), Biographical History of North Carolina, Vol. VII, pp. 6-8, 12-13.

The Phifer family material dates from 1849 to 1895. The earliest item in this family's papers also concerns gold mining. The minutes of a meeting of the High Shoal Gold Mining Company on February 8, 1849, are included. George Lowndes Phifer was present at the meeting, and his father John Fulenwider Phifer was appointed manager of the company.

The greatest part of the Phifer material concerns cotton and cotton mills. Both of the Phifers mentioned above as well as the brother-in-law of George L. Phifer, Stephen Smith, were concerned with cotton mills. The Ivy Shoals Cotton Mills were established in Lincolnton in 1845 by John F. Phifer and R. W. Allison. (For information on Allison, see Samuel A. Ashe (ed.), Biographical History of North Carolina, Vol. II, pp. 1-5.) The successor of this company, also located in Lincolnton, was the Elm Grove Cotton Mills owned by Stephen Smith and George L. Phifer. Smith, a planter and merchant in Livingston, Alabama, apparently gained interest in the mills through his wife "Mamie" Phifer.

The correspondence of these men includes discussions on dye, yarns, shirtings, the prices of cotton, the quality of warps, and other similar topics connected with the mills. A large portion of the letters is also concerned with the settlement of the estate of John F. Phifer which involved an \$18,000 debt which the Elm Grove Cotton Mills had assumed from its predecessor. Letters from attorneys, from R. W. Allison, and from firms who had dealt with the Ivy Shoals Cotton Mills are included under this latter topic.

There are two items concerning some property owned by George L.

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Phifer in Bastrop, Louisiana. Included are an agreement between Phifer and Willie B. and Wesly Morgan in January, 1886, whereby the Morgan Brothers would rent 175 acres of Phifer's plantation and carry on a general mercantile business, and a letter from the Morgan Brothers in August, 1886, reporting on the farm and business. Other miscellaneous items in the Phifer material include an agreement in 1852 between John F. Phifer, George Mosteller, Caleb Phifer, and R. W. Allison to form a copartnership "for the purpose of manufacturing cotton"; a type-written copy of the will of Martin Phifer, Sr., 1789; a partial genealogy including some of the Phifer family; and the commission of George Phifer to the rank of Captain (1877).

Finding Aids

Main Entry Card

Geographic Card

Lincolnton, N. C.

Autograph Cards

Allison, R[obert] W[ashington] (3) (1885-1895)

Avery, C[lark] M[oulton] (13) (1859-1862)

Avery, I[saac] T[homas] (3) (n.d., 1842, 1857)

Subject Cards

AVERY FAMILY--Isaac Thomas and Clark Moulton--1842-1869

COMMERCE AND BUSINESS--Cotton mills--Lincolnton, N. C.--1853-1895

MINES AND MINING--Gold--North Carolina, 1842 and 1849

PHIFER, MARTIN, SR.--Will of--1789

WAR--CIVIL--33rd Regiment--[1862]-1864

--"The Bethel Regiment"--May 22-November 1, 1861

See also

Phifer, Edward W., Jr. "The Saga of a Burke County Family," North Carolina Historical Review, XXXIX (Winter, Spring, Summer, 1962), 1-17, 140-147, 305-339.

Finding Aid completed on 20 December 1967 by Betty H. Carter