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Penniman Family Papers, 1898, no date

2 folders

Processed by Dennis Northcott, November 2012

REPOSITORY

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DONOR INFORMATION

Papers were purchased from Perry Osieczonek in May 2012.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

H.C. Penniman resided in St. Louis, Missouri, during the 1849 cholera epidemic.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Papers contains reminiscences (6 pages) signed H.C. Penniman titled "Cholera in St. Louis Years 1849, 50, 51," which describe the cholera epidemic and the great fire of St. Louis in 1849 (see transcript of these reminiscences below). Papers also contain letter signed Geo. Wallace Penniman [George Wallace Penniman], Southbridge, Mass., to Harry C. Penniman, Dallas, Texas, July 12, 1898, regarding the descendants of Harry C. Penniman's grandfather Amasa Penniman; undated membership application to the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution filled out by Mrs. Clara M. Penniman (wife of Harry Penniman) of Dallas, Texas, in which she traces her ancestry to Revolutionary War soldier George Goodhue; undated membership application to the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution filled out by Mrs. Edith Marian Cleary (wife of William Thomas Cleary and daughter of Harry Penniman, Jr., and Edith M. Price Penniman) of Dallas, Texas; and four blank Daughters of the American Revolution forms.

Cholera in St. Louis

Years 1849, 50, 51

I went to St. Louis Nov 1848 it took me two weeks to make the trip which was average time in those days as it was by Rail Lake & River transportation population of St. Louis then 45,000. Gas & Water Works were partially introduced about the time of my arrival & there were wells on the St. Corners of most of the Blocks I do recollect of there being a cistern in the city a large part of the people drank well water thinking it purer than the River Water & it cost nothing. Feby 1849 I took the position of Bookkeeper in the wholesale Grocery House of D.A. January & Co in April the first Death occurred by cholera in St. Louis. the victim was a Miss Wilgus at the Planters House & deaths occurred from than time, increasing daily there were 14 employed in the House of January & Co and by the 1st of June they had all quit but J.C. Cabot the Junior partner & myself. I was afraid to leave as the only way to leave the City was by steamboat & many of the passengers died before they could reach a Rail Road May 25, 1849 the steamboat Edward Bates came in from Keokuk landed at the upper Levee about 12 oclock a fire broke out aboard of her she was cut loose the wind held her to the shore as she floated down the River & she set fire to twenty six steamboats all of which were totally consumed the fire crossed the Levee & burned up upwards of Four Hundred Brick Stores in the heart of the City. Citizens said the heat & smoke would wipe out the cholera on the contrary the deaths the next day increased four foal. Whiskey was free on the night of the fire & that I believe of the cause of the great increase in the death roll. by the middle of June the deaths daily were to 200 to 250 & it was said 10,000 people had left the city leaving 35,000 to 40,000. A call was ~~on~~ made for citizens meeting at the Court Mayor Kennett said he was willing to let the people make any demand on him & he would execute their wishes. A committee was chosen who issued there order that no vegetables should be brought in the City a Cannon was placed on the Bank of River & every Boat coming from New Orleans was obliged to land her passengers on a Island oposit the cannon & still the daily death list increased increased. on the 4 July all the stores were closed & the dealers gave up to the City all their Lime, Tar pitch & c on the evening of the 4th the streets were white with Lime & Tar & Pitch was burning on every Block. I dined on 4th three miles in the Country Coming in on the morning of the 5th the morning papers reported 325 deaths on the 4th which was the largest number of deaths in any day during its prevalence during the week of 4th July 83 persons died in a row of five tenement Houses on Washington Avenue they drank Water from a pump at the Corner of the Street as an experiment the handle was removed from that pump & the number of deaths in those fell off to 5 or 6 a week all the wells on the streets were closed & the people were ordered to drink filtered River Water & the deaths list fell off from 300 to 100 or less a day I believe if they would have drank Rain or Cistern water it would have entirely disappeared in the months of May June & July there was Ten Thousand registered cholera deaths in St. Louis during all the time the Wind Came from the East, it then changed & cholera begun to abate when the deaths fell off to fifty a day the Citizens gave it no more thought & the papers were silent about it & with cold weather it disappeared 1850 I was clerk in the Planters House & cholera came again the House employed 115 servants &c &c & it was here I learned how to treat it we Kept in the Office a good stock of pure Mustard several Gross of Brown's Jamaica Ginger Radway Ready Relief a pure article of Blackberry Brandy. if any one was reported with cholera Symptoms we went to him with the above remedies if they were sick at the stomach we gave him a Glass of Warm Water a Table spoonful of Mustard & the same of salt stir it. it will drink it & it will empty the stomach then give him Radway Ready Relief or

Browns Ginger as the severity of the case may be if there Cramp in the Limbs give the patient a Hot Mustard Foot Bath & rubbing & he will soon be on the mend.

Let every family in Dallas supply themselves with the Remedies I mention dont drink any Water but Boiled Cistern water live on Rice soup & well Cooked vegetables do all your eating by 3 o clock in the afternoon go to bed with an empty stomach & you will never have the cholera if you do not follow these precautions it will reach here by spring & it will be more fatal than it was in St. Louis. if it comes I will remain in Dallas & do all I can for the suffers.

H.C. Penniman