

**JOHN H. BILLS AND FAMILY PAPERS**  
Ms. 2075  
Inventory

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections  
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library  
Louisiana State University Libraries  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

Reformatted 2003  
Revised 2011, 2021

**CONTENTS OF INVENTORY**

SUMMARY ..... 3  
BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE ..... 4  
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE ..... 4  
COLLECTION DESCRIPTION ..... 5  
CROSS REFERENCES..... 7  
CONTAINER LIST ..... 9

**Use of manuscript materials.** If you wish to examine items in the manuscript group, please place a request via the Special Collections Request System. Consult the Container List for location information.

**Photocopying.** Should you wish to request photocopies, please consult a staff member. The existing order and arrangement of unbound materials must be maintained.

**Publication.** Readers assume full responsibility for compliance with laws regarding copyright, literary property rights, and libel.

Proper acknowledgement of LLMVC materials must be made in any resulting writing or publications. The correct form of citation for this manuscript group is given on the summary page. Copies of scholarly publications based on research in the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections are welcomed.

**SUMMARY**

<b>Size.</b>	103 items
<b>Geographic locations.</b>	Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas
<b>Inclusive dates.</b>	1825, 1836-1880
<b>Bulk dates.</b>	1855-1861
<b>Language.</b>	English
<b>Summary.</b>	Family and business letters, bills, and receipts of John H. Bills, merchant, of Bolivar, in Hardeman County, Tennessee and Bayou Bartholomew, Louisiana. Letters relate to lands in Arkansas, dealings with factors, national and Louisiana state politics, the Democratic Party, and Reconstruction. Correspondents include Daniel Graham, James Walker, and Horace Polk.
<b>Organization.</b>	Arranged chronologically.
<b>Restrictions on access.</b>	No restrictions on access.
<b>Related collections.</b>	Horace M. Polk Letters, Mss. 1628
<b>Copyright.</b>	Copyright of the original materials is retained by descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
<b>Citation.</b>	John H. Bills and Family Papers, Mss. 2075, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
<b>Stack locations.</b>	A:17

**BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE**

John H. Bills was a postmaster, merchant, and major of Bolivar, Hardeman County, Tennessee, who also owned a plantation on Bayou Bartholomew, Louisiana. Bills was the father-in-law of Tennessee and Louisiana legislator Horace M. Polk.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

Personal and business letters discuss lands in Arkansas, dealings with factors, cotton trade, national and Louisiana state politics, the Democratic Party, the battle of Shiloh, and slave customs and behavior. Prominent correspondents include Daniel Graham, James Walker, and Horace M. Polk. Additional items consist of statements of accounts with various factors, receipts for goods and services, and bills of lading.

## **COLLECTION DESCRIPTION**

Correspondence to John H. Bills includes routine business letters; letters relating to taxes on land of Horace Polk and Samuel W. Polk in Dyer and Henderson Counties, Tennessee (December 18, 1836 and May 8, 1837); a routine letter from Memphis factors, Harris, Wormsley and Company (January 10, 1856); a letter from Edward Graham, realtor, in Florence, Arkansas, concerning swamp and public lands available for purchase in Desha, Drew, Jefferson and Chicot Counties and their proximity to railroads (December 20, 1855); a letter from A. Ewing, president of Planters Bank of Tennessee, regarding preparation of a land deed (February 1, 1856); and a letter from John A. Taliaferro, De Soto Parish, requesting protection of a slave belonging to Duke A. Beadles (April 14, 1856).

Letters to John H. Bills and Son, general merchants of Bolivar, include a routine letter from A.O. Harris (July 9, 1852); a letter from Hart, Donegan and Company, New Orleans, reporting that large sales in Liverpool made the cotton market active but the advance in freight rates have checked the demand (November 13, 1852); factor letters from Harris, Wormsley and Company, Memphis (January 15, March 2, 24, 29, and April 12, 1856); and a letter from Lownes, Orgill and Company, Memphis, discussing the inability to supply order due to the burning of steamboat *Collier* at the wharf (April 3, 1856).

A letter to Bills from Daniel Graham, U.S. Register of the Treasury and Secretary of State, Tennessee, states his lack of confidence in New York and New England politicians with the exception of Nathan Clifford, mentions his mistrust of Stephen Douglas, comments on the inability of President Buchanan to judge the fitness of men as illustrated by his endorsement of Robert J. Walker, Simon Cameron, and Frederick Perry Stanton, and mentions the White House aspirations of Andrew Johnson (March 1859). Also included is a letter from James Walker, Tennessee politician, in which he predicts a difficult state election in summer and urges defeat of Whig Party (March 29, 1859); letters from Field Langstroth and Company, referring to the meeting of the Democratic nominating convention in Baltimore after its failure to nominate presidential candidates at Charleston, South Carolina (June 20, 1860), and secession (July 19 and December 7, 1860); and a letter from B. Bailey, expressing his opinion that North Carolina is in favor of secession before yielding its rights in the Union (December 17, 1860).

Personal letters to Bills include a letter from Andrew J. Walker, cousin of Horace Polk, commenting on difficulties encountered in traveling to Monroe and advising Bills to travel on Bayou Bartholomew by way of Ouachita River (May 7, 1859); a letter from Ophelia Bills Polk, wife of Horace, stating the Secession Convention adjourned to New Orleans and mentioning the "first trip of the cars" on the railroad between Vicksburg and Monroe (February 4, 1861).

Other correspondence to John H. Bills includes a letter from Paul T. Jones discussing progress in brick making (September 28, 1860); a letter from Charles C. Duke, [overseer] referring to slave courting and marriage customs (October 14, 1860), and a letter from D.V. Alexander, Trenton, Tennessee, offering to sell a slave boy for \$900 (April 9, 1861). Also included is a letter to Bills from his daughter, Eva, commenting on her husband's injury at the Battle of Shiloh (June 24, 1862); a letter from his daughter, Clara Allison, mentioning 3 workmen sick with smallpox

(March 17, 1866); and letters from his son-in-law, T.F.P. Allison, mentioning the refusal of African Americans to celebrate July 4 with Radicals (July 5, 1868), the nomination of Bills by Radicals and the nomination of Stokes by [Conservatives] (May 23, 1869), and the danger of the breakup of the state's Conservative Party (June 26, 1870).

Other items include an option signed by Bills, agent for the trustees of East Tennessee College (present day University of Tennessee at Knoxville) to purchase land in Gibson County, Tennessee, from James and William Yarborough (January 4, 1841); a receipt from Memphis Insurance Company (October 21, 1848); a bill of lading for cotton shipped by Bills to A. O. Harris, Memphis (December 10, 1850); a claim of John Nuckolls, Hardeman County, Tennessee, against William B. Turley (November 27, 1839); the appointment of administrators of estate of James Cook, Davis County, N. C., (September 24, 1850); a trial balance for J. N. and W. J. Bills, Woodville, Louisiana, showing debts, particularly for the "Rs" – runaways (January 1, 1854); routine receipted bills and business letters (1868-1876); and freight bills and receipts (1875).

**CROSS REFERENCES**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of relevant documents</b>
Buchanan, James, 1791-1868.	1859	Inability to judge the fitness of men illustrated by his endorsement of Robert J. Walker, Simon Cameron, and Frederick Perry Stanton, Daniel Graham letter, March 3.
Clifford, Nathan, 1803-1881.	1859	Daniel Graham states lack confidence in all New York and New England politicians except Nathan Clifford. March 3.
Cotton trade--United States.	1850-1861	A. O. Harris, Memphis. 1850, 1852. Hart, Donegan and Company, New Orleans. 1852. Lownes, Orgill and Company, Memphis. 1856. Harris, Wormsley and Company, Memphis. 1856. Hill and Doiron, Memphis. 1859-1860. Gates and Wood, Memphis. 1861.
Cotton--Prices--Great Britain.	1852	Large Liverpool sale made market active but advance in freight rates checked demand. Hart, Donegan and Company letter, November 13.
Democratic Party (U.S.)	1860	Horace Polk and wife attend convention to appoint delegates to nominating convention in Charleston. L. P. Spyker letter; February 2. Reference to Democratic Nominating Convention in Baltimore and secession; Field Langstroth and Co. letters, June 20, July 19, December 7; B. Bailey letter, December 17.
Douglas, Stephen A. (Stephen Arnold), 1813-1861.	1859	Daniel Graham admits Douglas is best debater in Congress, but states lack trust in Douglas prevents voting for him. March 3.
Johnson, Andrew, 1808-1875.	1859	Daniel Graham states Johnson excels in demagoguery and has White House aspirations. March 3.
Merchants--Tennessee.	1825, 1836-1873	Personal and business papers concern family matters, factors, Arkansas land, politics and Reconstruction.
Polk, Horace M. (Horace Moore), 1819-1883.	1826-1866	Letter relative to taxes on Tennessee lands, December 18, 1826.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of relevant documents</b>
		Moved from Jackson Parish to Bayou Bartholomew in Morehouse Parish, Andrew Walker letter, May 1, 1859. Delegate to Democratic Convention in Baton Rouge, February 2, 1860; member of Louisiana Secession Convention, February 4, 1861. Mentions possible need for note in legal suit and desire to sell plantation, Horace Polk letter, November 14, 1866.
Reconstruction (U.S. history, 1865-1877)	1866-1870	As much trouble settling war as starting it; may next blood spilt be that of Radicals and traitors. William M. Todd letter, April 20, 1866. Nomination of Bills by Radicals and Stokes by Conservatives, May 23, 1869; danger of Conservative Party disintegrating, June 26, 1870. T. F. P. Allison Letters.
Slavery--United States.	1860-1861	Information on slave courting and marriage customs furnished Bills by Duke, probably an overseer, October 14, 1860. Boy, age 10 or 11, offered for sale by D.V. Alexander. April 9, 1861.
Smallpox--Tennessee.	1866	3 workmen of T. F. P. Allison confined in hospital in woods. March 17.



**CONTAINER LIST**

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders</u>	<u>Contents</u>
A:17	1	1-3	Papers, 1825, 1836-1880