



Bowles Family Papers (R1540)

Collection Number: R1540

Collection Title: Bowles Family Papers

Dates: 1837-2019

Creator: The Bowles Family

Abstract: The Bowles Family Papers include the physician record books, land holdings, and additional business accounts of Dr. William Hearst Bowles, along with four generations of family correspondence. The correspondence spans about one hundred years. Many of the early letters are between Dr. W. H. Bowles (1827-1903) and his three wives: Augusta Sophia Glanville Bowles (1828-1857), Louisa Bray Greatwood Kinsey Bowles (1840-1868), and Elizabeth Ella Kinsey Bowles (1855-1940), as well as their extended families.

Collection Size: 6.25 cubic feet
(169 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research but may be stored offsite. This collection is available at the [State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at rolla@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Donor Information: The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Lucy H. Sutcliffe on April 28, 2024 (Accession No. RA1749).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Bowles Family Papers can be found in the following collections:

[James Memorial Public Library Photograph Collection](#), (R1480)

[Maries County Medical Register Records](#) (R0319)

[Methodist Episcopal Church South, Lanes Prairie, Maries County, Missouri](#) (R0432)

[Clair V. Mann Cemetery Records 1884-1974](#), (C2667)

[Goeffrey Wade Donnan Papers](#), (S1222)

[Giesler and Spurgeon Families Papers](#) (R0580)

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Biographical Note:

Dr. William Hearst Bowles was born in St. Louis County to Caleb and Mary Hearst Bowles in 1827. He was the first cousin of Senator George Hearst of California, his mother being the senator's aunt. Senator George Hearst was born in Missouri. He married Phoebe Apperson, who came to Missouri to teach school in St. James at the Meramec Iron Works. George Hearst and Phoebe Apperson are the parents of William Randolph Hearst, the famous newspaper publisher and owner of Hearst Communications Company. Bowles lived in St. Louis County with his family until he graduated from McDowell Medical College in about 1851.

Dr. Bowles chose to settle near the Dry Fork of the Bourbeuse in the northern part of Lanes Prairie, Missouri, shortly after completing his degree. He is considered by many to have been the first licensed medical practitioner in Maries County. In the beginning, Dr. Bowles' medical practice was very localized near Vienna, Missouri, replacing two recently retired unlicensed physicians; however, his service area quickly expanded to include a one-hundred-mile radius that stretched from his home in Lanes Prairie in all directions. Dr. Bowles quickly gained the reputation of a competent and caring physician who never turned down a patient in need, regardless of their ability to pay.

Bowles married his first wife, Augusta Sophia Glanville, in June 1852. She was the daughter of Reverend John Glanville, a Methodist minister and pioneer who also lived in St. Louis County. The couple wrote generously to each other during their two-year-long courtship; while Bowles attended medical school and then moved to Maries County together once they were married. Their union, though short-lived, resulted in two children, Octavia Ann Bowles James (1853-1894) and William Alfred Bowles (1857-1939). Augusta died from consumption in 1857, leaving two young children behind.

Dr. Bowles married his second wife, Louisa Greatwood Bray Kinsey (1840-1868), in 1866. She was born in England and immigrated to Vienna, Missouri, in 1856 with her brother Thomas Albert Bray (1845-1906), and their father William Bray Sr. (1810-1883). Bowles, excited by his new marriage, had a home constructed for his beloved new wife and named it after her. Unfortunately, Louisa Bowles died before Greatwood House was completed. This union did not produce any biological children; however, Bowles adopted Louisa's daughter from her previous marriage to Thomas J. Kinsey (1823-1865). Kinsey died in 1865, and Louisa's death left their daughter, Minnie G. Kinsey (1865-1959), orphaned. Dr. Bowles raised Minnie as his own, with his two other children from his first marriage.

Dr. William Hearst Bowles' third wife, Elizabeth Ella Kinsey (1855-1940), was Minnie's first cousin. They married in 1877, and together they had eight children, three sons and four daughters. Their first son, Caleb Matthew Bowles (1879-1881), died around the age of 2; the other two, John Anderson Bowles (1881-1940), and Joseph Hearst Bowles (1885-1958), would

both follow in their father's footsteps and become doctors. All four daughters married into prominent families: Margaret Augusta Bowles Waltenspoel (1883-1971), Mary Louise Bowles Lenox (180-1987), Hortense Deborah Bowles Donnan (1893-1990), and Lucy Jane Bowles Bennetsen (1895-1994).

Dr. William Hearst Bowles died of pneumonia in 1903 at the age of 85. He was believed to be one of, if not the, wealthiest man in Maries County in the late 1800s, owning more than 7,000 acres of land in at least three counties in Missouri. He managed, with the help of a trusted assistant, a successful farm at Lanes Prairie, where they traded and sold livestock and boasted a productive and profitable orchard. His medical practice lasted 50 years, serving seven counties, and was quite successful. Bowles was a founding member of the Freemasons in St. James and served as a county representative in the state legislature. The *Maries County Gazette* summarized Dr. Bowles's character in his obituary with the following quote: "He was a public-spirited citizen, an affectionate and indulgent husband and parent, and the loss to the community occasioned by his death will be long felt." The Bowles family estate was in a state of decline by the turn of the century, and what was left of it was sold at auction after his death. E. Ella Kinsey died in 1940.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following 2 series with 8 subseries:

Personal

- Correspondence
- Writings
- Legal Documents
- Miscellaneous
- Datebooks & Planners
- Photographs

Professional

- Physicians Visiting Lists
- Receipts, Ledgers & Account Books

Scope and Content Note:**Personal Papers**

This series contains correspondence between Dr. William H. Bowles and all three of his wives, their extended families, and other prominent businessmen in Maries and Phelps Counties. Most of the legal documents are land deeds for the properties owned by Dr. W. H. Bowles and Judge Matthew W. Kinsey, but there are also court documents, land rental agreements, and estate documents for various members of the Bowles family, including the extended families of his wives. There are very few photographs in this collection; most are not labeled. For photographs of the Bowles family, please see the [James Memorial Public Library Photograph Collection](#) (R1480).

It also appears that one of the Bowles family descendants, perhaps Lucy Finch, whose date books and planners are also in this collection, transcribed some of the correspondence between Dr. Bowles and his wives to include in a book about Maries County history. The name of this

book, or if it was ever published, is unknown, but several pages of the manuscript and the transcriptions of the early correspondence can be found in this series.

Though marriage bound the Bowles and Kinsey families legally, both families were deeply religious; their charity work largely revolved around supporting their local religious communities both spiritually and monetarily. The correspondence between and among the families often mentions attending church, attending sponsored church activities, discussions of broader Christian beliefs, and a strong reliance on faith to lift their spirits.

Professional Papers

This series consists of materials pertaining to the medical practice of Dr. William H. Bowles, including physicians' visiting lists, patient account records, and medicines prescribed. This series also contains other business-related information, such as farm ledgers, receipts for business items, sharecropping records, and profit logs for Greatwood House farmland passed down through the Bowles family line.

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