



## Wiley Britton Papers (C4401)

**Collection Number:** C4401

**Collection Title:** Wiley Britton Papers

**Dates:** 1878-1997

**Creator:** Wiley Britton, 1842-1930

**Abstract:** The papers contain memoirs, correspondence, financial records, newspaper clippings, and genealogical information collected by Wiley Britton and his children.

**Collection Size:** 0.2 cubic feet, 14 MB of digital files  
(5 folders; 4 jpegs)

**Language:** Collection materials are in English.

**Repository:** The State Historical Society of Missouri

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

**Restrictions on Use:** The Donor has given, assigned, and transferred to the Society all copyrights, and associated rights the Donor may possess in the materials.

**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Wiley Britton Papers* (C4401); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

**Donor Information:** The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Nargess M. Britton on behalf of W. Jeffrey Britton and Darwine Britton Bailey on May 18, 2009 (Accession No. CA 6230).

**Processed by:** Processed by Emily Theriac, January 2020.

### Biographical Note:

Wiley Britton was born on October 8, 1842, in Neosho, Missouri, to George Britton and Catherine Ann Moody. He spent most of his life living in and around Kansas City and even Washington D.C. A firm abolitionist, Britton enlisted in the 6<sup>th</sup> Kansas Cavalry on March 8,

1862, and served until he was mustered out on January 16, 1865. Britton was married to Margaret Elizabeth Hartley (1848-1932) in 1863 and had two children, Alice (1864 – bef. 1910) and Wiley (1866-1870). The couple got a divorce in 1903 and Britton married Erla Bell (1884-1910). Britton had two more children with Erla Darwine (1904-1997) and Herbert Spencer (1906-1983), who are largely responsible for compiling and preserving this collection. Wiley Britton worked as a pension examiner after the end of the Civil War, but lost his job in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century supposedly due to political differences. Wiley Britton died on September 14, 1930, in Leavenworth, Kansas.

Britton wrote about his experiences during the Civil War until he died. He also wrote about Missouri folk life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as his own scientific findings and possibly poetry. His published works include *Pioneer Life in Southwest Missouri*, two volumes of *The Civil War on the Border*, and *Memoirs of the Rebellion on the Border* to name a few.

### **Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into the following two series:

Wiley Britton Papers  
Born Digital

### **Scope and Content Note:**

#### **Wiley Britton Papers**

This series contains materials related primarily to the life of Wiley Britton and his immediate family. Included is *A Tribute to Patriotism*, a handwritten and unpublished memoir written by Britton around the turn of the century that praises the soldiers who stood up to racial injustice. Britton also talks candidly about mental and physical health problems Civil War veterans faced. Wiley Britton's will and personal papers are also included. Also held in these papers are several newspaper clippings and articles about or written by Britton. Two of Wiley Britton's original financial ledgers are included along with many other bank records. A collection of letters by various political/personal/military friends of Britton advocating his reinstatement as examiner of the Pension Office. A printed card of Britton is included as well as his daughter, Alice's public school medal. There are also several photocopies of his descendants' birth and death certificates.

#### **Born Digital**

The Born Digital series consists of four Jpeg files that depict the wife of Wiley Britton, Elra Bell; his daughter, Darwine Bailey; his son, Herbert Spencer Britton, and family; and children, Darwine and Herbert Spencer. The originals of these images do not appear in the collection. An electronic version of the Wiley Britton Papers is available.

### **Container List:**

#### **Wiley Britton Papers Series**

- f. 1                      Memoirs, 1878-1928
- f. 2                      Correspondence, 22 February 1896-29 March 1897
- f. 3                      Financial Records, August 1892-10 March 1937

- f. 4 Newspaper Clippings, December 1893-September 1929  
f. 5 Genealogy, 22 March 1915-27 October 1997

**Born Digital Series**

- b.d. images 1-4 1) Elra Bell; 2) Darwine Bailey; 3) Herbert Spencer Britton family; 4)  
Darwine and Herbert Spencer Britton

**Index:**

| Index Term                     | Folders |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| Britton, Wiley, 1842-1930      | 1-5     |
| American Civil War (1861-1865) | 1, 2    |