

**MS 1047**  
**MURRAY, BREDETT C., 1837-1924**  
**Papers, 1835-1993 (bulk 1860-1880)**

**DESCRIPTION**

This collection consists of correspondence, documents, printed material, and photographs relating to newspaper publisher and Confederate soldier Bredett C. Murray, and his brother in law, businessman and politician Lewis S. Owings. The bulk of the collection dates to the Civil War era, and documents Murray's and Owings' experiences in New Mexico, Arizona and Texas. Photographs in the collection include portraits of the Murray and Owings family members.

2 boxes, .75 linear ft.

**ACQUISITION**

The collection was donated by Rae Thomas Saye and B.C. Thomas, both descendants of Bredett C. Murray.

**ACCESS**

There are no restrictions on access to this collection.

**RELATED MATERIALS**

Issues of the *Mesilla Times*, a Mesilla, New Mexico newspaper edited by Murray from 1860 to 1862 are also available on microfilm in the library.

**COPYRIGHT**

Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Archives Department.

**PROCESSING**

Rose Byrne processed parts of this collection in April 1993, under the supervision of Adelaide Elm. Scott Denlinger completed processing the collection in November 1998.

**ARRANGEMENT**

The manuscript material is arranged in two series: Correspondence, Papers and Biographical Information, 1835-1993; Photographs, 1850s-1910s.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

### Bredett C. Murray

Bredett Corydon Murray was born January 14, 1837, in Allegan, Michigan. At age thirteen, he apprenticed at the printing office of Elisha Bassett, a cousin of his mother. He graduated from the Allegan Seminary, and a business college in Kalamazoo, where he held a clerical position at the recorder's office. Murray left Michigan about 1857, and worked briefly as a reporter in New Orleans before traveling to San Antonio, Texas. In San Antonio, Murray met Lewis S. Owings, who had a mercantile business. Murray and Owings became life-long friends, occasional business partners, and eventually brothers-in-law. About 1859, Murray moved to Mesilla, New Mexico.

From 1860 to 1862, Murray edited and published the *Mesilla Times* in Mesilla, New Mexico. Under his editorship the newspaper advocated for a separate Arizona Territory, and for the cause of the Confederacy. When the Civil War began, Murray returned to San Antonio and joined the Confederate States Army in October, 1862. Murray served in Company E, Madison's Regiment, in Louisiana and southern Texas. After the war Murray married Amanda Swisher on October 7, 1866, at Owings' home in San Antonio. Amanda was the younger sister of Helen Swisher Owings.

Between 1867 and 1872, Murray lived in Texas and Kansas, and was associated with the *San Antonio Express*, the *Topeka Commonwealth*, the *Democratic Statesman* in Austin, and the *Denison Weekly News*. After a period of time in which he operated a job printing plant, he returned to the newspaper business, and began publishing the *Sunday Gazetteer* in Denison in 1883. Murray helped organize the Texas Press Association, and was a member of the Typographical Union. He was elected to the Denison City Council, and was a member of the Confederate Veterans Camp. Murray also had a great interest in methods of shorthand, and wrote and collected books on the subject.

After thirty years of publishing the *Sunday Gazetteer*, Murray sold the plant in 1913 and retired at the age of seventy-six. The purchaser of the *Gazetteer*, J.E. Wall, persuaded Murray to edit a weekly column of reminiscences, which he did until his death on February 6, 1924, at the age of eighty-seven.

### Lewis S. Owings

Lewis S. Owings was born in Roane County, east Tennessee, on September 6, 1820. By 1836 he had traveled to Texas to join his older brother Samuel, and both fought in the Texas war for independence. Samuel E. Owings reportedly died at the Alamo while Lewis remained with the army and reportedly was present at the Battle of San Jacinto. Lewis Owings was referred to as Dr. Owings, but it is unclear when or where he ever practiced medicine. He was, however, a successful merchant and politician.

In 1852 Owings married Helen Marr Swisher, and opened a store in what became Karnes County, Texas, southeast of San Antonio. He was elected to the Texas legislature from Karnes County in 1855. Lewis and Helen Owings moved to Mesilla, New Mexico, in 1858, where he was active in merchandising, real estate and mining. He was secretary and treasurer of the Mowry City Association in 1859, a group promoting the new townsite. In 1860, Owings became the first provisional governor of the proposed Territory of Arizona, and employed B.C. Murray as his personal secretary. Owings joined the Confederate forces when the Civil War began, and was in New Orleans the day of the surrender to Federal authorities.

After the Civil War, Owings lived in San Antonio, Texas, where he resumed his civilian occupations of real estate agent and merchandiser. Owings assumed the office of Mayor when the town of Denison, Texas incorporated in 1873,. He began many public

projects, including the building of a public school. He resigned his office within a year, however, because of failing health. Owings died August 20, 1875.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of correspondence, business and military documents, printed material, and photographs, relevant to newspaper publisher and Confederate soldier Bredett C. Murray and his family. There is also personal and business correspondence from Lewis S. Owings, Murray's close friend and brother-in-law, who was elected first provisional governor of the proposed Territory of Arizona in 1860. The collection includes photographs of Owings family members as well.

Series 1, Correspondence, Papers and Biographical Information, 1835-1993, includes the incoming and outgoing correspondence of Murray and the incoming correspondence of his wife Amanda Swisher Murray. The collection includes very little correspondence between Murray and his wife. Rebecca Senf transcribed the personal correspondence in the collection, which also includes transcriptions of original letters not retained by the Society. L. Boyd Finch reviewed the correspondence during the transcription process, and his manuscript annotations in red ink appear on some of the transcriptions. Significant correspondents include Frank Higgins, James H. Tevis, Bethel Coopwood, and S.M. Baird. Murray, a native of Michigan, wrote several letters to his parents in Allegan, Michigan during the war, explaining his decision to join the Confederate army. His letters also contain comments on army life and his political views. Amanda Swisher Murray's correspondence includes many letters written between 1864 and 1867 by a school friend, Mollie Jankes, from Chappell Hill, Texas. Murray collected and wrote poetry, and the collection includes copies of poems clipped from newspapers, as well as a transcription of one of Murray's notebooks not retained in the collection, which includes samples of poems he wrote himself.

The collection includes rare printed material, including an 1860 copy of the Arizona Territorial Constitution, an 1859 Mowry City Association (Arizona Territory) pamphlet, and two issues of the *Mesilla Times*, a Mesilla, New Mexico newspaper which Murray edited from 1860-1862. Military documents include muster lists, a letter of protest dated May 4, 1865, signed by Murray and other members of his regiment, urging that the fighting continue, and Murray's oath of allegiance to the United States government signed in 1865 upon the end of the war. Also included are xerostatic copies of conduct passes issued to Murray.

Business documents in the collection are primarily Owings'. They include mining company stock certificates, legal documents and deeds, and correspondence related to the confiscation of cattle and other property from the Owings' cattle business in Mexico by the Mexican Liberal Army in the 1860s. These documents list his wife, Helen, as principal plaintiff.

The collection also includes biographical information on the Murray, Owings, and Swisher families collected by Murray's descendants and others. Other material in the collection includes the correspondence between Martin H. Hall and B.C. Thomas, concerning Bredett Murray's activities as editor of the *Mesilla Times*. Hall conducted extensive research on Murray's paper, and authored several articles on the newspaper's publishing history.

Series 2, Photographs, 1850s-1910s, consists of portraits of Bredett C. Murray and Amanda Swisher Murray, their parents, children, and grandchildren, and portraits of Lewis S. Owings and Helen Swisher Owings. There is a picture of the Murray family home in Denison, Texas, a picture of the family dog, and a few miscellaneous portraits. Formats include albumen, ambrotypes, daguerrotypes, and tintypes.

## BOX AND FOLDER LIST

### **Box 1**

#### **Series 1: Correspondence, Papers and Biographical Information, 1835-1993**

- f.1 Amanda Swisher Murray correspondence, 1864-1871
- f.2 Amanda S. Murray correspondence, 1864-1871 [transcripts]
- f.3 Amanda S. Murray—Bredett C. Murray correspondence, 1872 [transcripts]
- f.4 Bredett C. Murray incoming correspondence, 1863-1910
- f.5 Bredett C. Murray incoming correspondence, 1863-1910 [transcripts]
- f.6 Bredett C. Murray outgoing correspondence, 1857-1866
- f.7 Bredett C. Murray outgoing correspondence, 1857-1866 [transcripts]
- f.8 B.C. Murray correspondence transcriptions of items not retained in the collection, 1865-1895
- f.9 Roxana West Murray correspondence, 1863-1865
- f.10 Roxana West Murray correspondence, 1863-1865 [transcripts]
- f.11 L.S. Owings correspondence, 1862-1872
- f.12 L.S. Owings correspondence, 1862-1872 [transcripts]
- f.13 Miscellaneous correspondence, 1854-1892
- f.14 Bredett C. Murray military service documents, 1862-1865
- f.15 Murray family and Owings family business records, 1853-1909
- f.16 Poetry and other literary works, 1860s, 1889
- f.17 Printed material, 1856-1867
- f.18 Miscellaneous newspaper clippings, 1835-1895
- f.19 Printed proclamation of L.S. Owings as Mayor of Denison, Texas, March 14, 1873
- f.20 Murray—Owings—Swisher biographical information, 1854-1993
- f.21 Martin H. Hall to B.C. Thomas correspondence, 1966-1971
- f.22 Checklist of extant *Mesilla Times* issues

#### **Series 2: Photographs, 1850s-1910s**

### **Box 2**

- f.23 Amanda Swisher Murray photographs, ca. 1860
- f.24 Bredett C. Murray photographs, 1850s-1910s
- f.25 Children of Amanda and Bredett Murray photographs, ca. 1870
- f.26 Edwin Alonzo Murray, Roxana West Murray photographs
- f.27 Helen Swisher Owings, L.S. Owings photographs, 1890s
- f.28 Thomas family members
- f.29 Miscellaneous photographs [removed from an album?]