

Gwinnett Historical Society

Whitworth Collection, 1821-1952 [bulk 1860-1910] Accession #1998-23

Abstract: The Whitworth family first settled in Gwinnett County in 1820. Four generations of the family have served Gwinnett County in positions ranging from justice of the peace and deputy sheriff to tax collector. This collection primarily includes Gwinnett County inferior and superior court record books dating from the nineteenth century and tax records kept by James Oliver Whitworth.

Administrative Information:

Provenance: The descendants of Christine Lindsey Whitworth, widow of R. B. Whitworth, Jr., donated this collection in 1998 (1998-23).

Preferred Citation: Please cite Whitworth Collection, Gwinnett Historical Society, Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Restrictions: None.

Size:

Susan J. Illis and Frances Johnson processed these papers in 1999 and 2000.

Biographical Sketch of the Whitworth Family

Richard W. Whitworth (1790-1857) drew land lot 253, 5th Land District of Gwinnett County in 1820, and moved to the county in December of that same year. He served as deputy sheriff and justice of the peace of Gwinnett County. Born in the Pendleton District of South Carolina, he served in the War of 1812. He and his wife, Mary Whitworth, had ten children, one of whom was James Oliver Whitworth.

Richard's brother, **John Claiborne Whitworth** (1799-1864), came to Gwinnett in 1824 and lived with his brother until his marriage. John Whitworth represented Gwinnett in the Georgia Legislature from 1842-1850 and 1853-1856. He also served as justice of the peace in Gwinnett County. He had twenty-one children.

James Oliver Whitworth (1835-1908) was born in the Bay Creek District, Gwinnett County on September 26, 1835. On December 23, 1858, he married Martha Elizabeth Stephens (1839-1922) of Walton County. They had six children: George Washington Whitworth (1859-); Robert Bartow Whitworth (1861-1939); Mary Jane Whitworth Watson (1863-); Richard Asbury Whitworth (1866-1954); Isaac Benjamin Whitworth (1868-1925); and a son who died in infancy (6/26/1871).

During the Civil War, James Whitworth enlisted in Company F, 35th Georgia Infantry. He lost an eye in the Battle of Cedar Run in 1862. In 1860, he joined Fergus Lodge, Number 135, Free and Accepted Masons.

A lifelong resident of Gwinnett County, Whitworth distinguished himself in his long service to the county. He began his career in public service in 1860, when he became justice of the peace, a position he held until 1862. From 1873 until 1878 he served as deputy sheriff under J. M. Patterson. From 1887 until 1890, he was tax collector for Gwinnett County, but resigned at the end of his term.

Known as Uncle Jimmie, he resided one mile south of Lawrenceville. Whitworth died on February 27, 1908 and was interred at New Cemetery.

Robert B. Whitworth, second son of James O. and Martha E. Whitworth, was born on August 13, 1861 in what was known as Harbins District (later Bay Creek). He attended the school operated by John B. Watson. In 1887, he entered Norcross High School. Elected ordinary of Gwinnett County in January 1893, he served until 1896. He was appointed county historian in 1930, but died without publishing a history. Many of his manuscripts and records were turned over to J. C. Flanigan who used this material in his *Volumes I & II, History of Gwinnett County*. Robert B. Whitworth, Jr. (d. 1978), the son of Robert B. Whitworth and former Lawrenceville postmaster, retained these papers; descendants of his widow donated them to the Gwinnett Historical Society.

Isaac Benjamin Whitworth, fourth son of James and Martha Whitworth, served as editor of the Perry-Rainey College Journal in 1894. Perry-Rainey College, located in Carl-Auburn, Georgia, forty miles north of Atlanta, was previously known as Mulberry High School.

His brother, **R. A. Whitworth**, served as professor of Latin & Modern Languages at Perry-Rainey. A graduate of Peabody Normal College (Nashville, Tennessee), he had eight years teaching experience when he joined the faculty of Perry-Rainey College.

Arrangement

- Series 1. Microfilmed Volumes, 1821-1897 [Reels 1-3]
- Series 2. James O. Whitworth Papers, 1859-1907 [Boxes 1-3]
- Series 3. Other Whitworth Family Members Papers, Bible 1856-1952 [Boxes 3-4]
- Series 4. Photographs, n.d. [Box 4]
- Series 5. Printed Materials, 1861-1941 [Boxes 5-6]
- Series 6. Unidentified/Miscellaneous Materials, c. 1890-1926 [Box 6]
- Series 7. Artifacts, n.d., [Boxes 7-20]

Description

Series 1. Microfilmed Volumes, 1821-1897 includes three reels of microfilm for ten original volumes, the majority of which are official Gwinnett County records. Robert B. Whitworth probably gathered these materials in preparation for writing the history of Gwinnett County, or they may have been passed through the family from Richard W. Whitworth and James O. Whitworth. Regardless, the fact that they were kept by the Whitworth family saved them from destruction in the courthouse fire of 9/10/1871. Although the originals of these volumes exist, researchers may only use the microfilm copies.

The Gwinnett County Inferior Court Minutes (1866-1875) include an index at the beginning of the volume. Unfortunately, the original volume is in poor condition. The Gwinnett Inferior Court Tax in Kind Record Book (1863-1865) also includes a front index and records payment of taxes by barter, with goods such as corn, wheat, oats, bacon and cotton exchanged for tax credits. The Gwinnett Inferior Court Execution Docket Book B (1843-1867) lists the names of parties, dates of judgement, and monies paid to attorney, jury, and clerks in inferior court cases. The Marriage License for Free Persons of Color Book B (1866-1884) is contained in the front section of the same book. Indexed by groom's surname, it provides rare documentation for African-Americans in Gwinnett County in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Gwinnett Superior Court Execution Docket and Miscellaneous Docket Book (1873-1876) dates from James O. Whitworth's service as deputy sheriff. Containing an index at the beginning of the volume, it lists cases the state of Georgia brought against Gwinnett County residents, with charges including assault, rape, stabbing, misdemeanor, and riots. It provides the names of witnesses as well. This volume also includes Justice Court Fi-Fa records, which document the lawsuits individuals brought against other individuals. The Gwinnett County Superior Court Docket Book (1835-1841) provides case numbers, date, parties involved, and judgements in cases mainly involving the recovery of money. John C. Whitworth, then Justice of the Peace, decided most of the judgements. The Gwinnett Superior Court Fi-Fa Book (1889) dates from James O. Whitworth's service as tax collector.

The R. D. Winn Farm Journal Book (1836-1843, 1863-1864) is a hand-bound volume in fragile condition. It contains a record of crop planting, weather, and progress, as well as information on livestock and accounts with individuals. Also included within this volume are instructions for making capons, agricultural theory and advice, and suggestions on the preservation of apples. R. D. Winn's connection with the Whitworth family is unknown.

The R. B. Whitworth Private Record Book (1893-1895) documents his service as Gwinnett County ordinary. It includes an 1893 list of marriage license applicants, providing information on date, names of males, race, and names of females. The volume also includes an account Whitworth kept with J. N. Gouge in 1896, detailing debit and

credit transactions. A reverse chronological list, 1893-1896, records funds received by Whitworth for marriage license applications.

Series 2. James Oliver Whitworth Papers, 1859-1907 includes a mixture of personal papers and official Gwinnett County documents, primarily documenting Whitworth's activities as a tax collector and businessman. This series includes a large number of tax receipts, predominantly fi-fa tax receipts. The fi-fa tax receipts are arranged by year, then alphabetically within each year designation. These serve as an excellent source for determining residency of individuals in Gwinnett County from 1887 until 1890. The tax receipts from the state treasury document payment by Whitworth, as tax collector for Gwinnett County, to W. A. Wright, Comptroller-General in Atlanta. The county tax receipts record payments to W. E. Brown, Gwinnett County treasurer. Whitworth's personal receipts, primarily for mundane items such as newspaper subscriptions, document the scarcity of paper during this period, as many are written on tiny scraps of paper. The calling cards include early greeting cards and an advertising card for H. Rosenberg, D.R. Optician, in Athens, Georgia, who offered "glasses fitted to the eye." In general, these papers illustrate Whitworth's scrupulousness in keeping records.

Series 3. Other Whitworth Family Members Papers, 1856-1952 includes papers of Jesse, Martha, Mary, Richard, and Robert B. Whitworth. Jesse Clower Whitworth 5/6/1913-9/15/1997 was a grandson of James Oliver Whitworth. The Martha Whitworth papers consist of correspondence from her sons, and a few letters written to her husband, James, when she traveled to Texas. The papers of Mary Whitworth document her application to obtain a widow's pension for her husband's service in the War of 1812.

Series 4. Photographs, n.d. includes a small number of photographs, the majority of which are unidentified. Two separate images depict James O. Whitworth, with an unidentified companion, and his wife, Martha Whitworth. One tintype is included. These photographs appear to date from the turn of the century.

Series 5. Printed Materials, 1861-1941 includes a variety of materials, none of which could be definitely attributed to specific family members. These items represent the date span of the collection, with materials dating from the Civil War to the mid-twentieth century. Of particular note are unusual items which document early Gwinnett County history: broadside for a missing child (Box 5, Folder 5); Chestnut Grove Union Musical Convention (Box 5, Folder 6); Fergus Lodge By-Laws (Box 5, Folder 12); and Hayne's Creek O. S. H. Association program for religious singing (Box 5, Folder 17). These items are evocative of late nineteenth century life in Gwinnett County.

Series 6. Unidentified/Miscellaneous Materials, c. 1890-1926 includes ... Like many contemporary scrapbooks of its time, the scrapbook is composed of newsclippings pasted into an existing book, in this case an 1860 *United States Statistics*. The majority of the newsclippings are not specific to Gwinnett County, but rather are poems, artwork, and essays focusing on diverse topics, including love, marriage, religion, Grover Cleveland, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Other topics of interest

to the compiler were temperance and sensational stories. Some relate to Athens and Atlanta, Georgia, including the work of columnists Bill Arp, who wrote about labor and female operatives, and Sarge Plunkett, of the *Atlanta Constitution*. Clippings of note include biographical sketches of R. B. Whitworth, D. T. Cain, and Isham Williams, as well as an article about the National American Woman's Suffrage Association meeting in Atlanta, at which Susan B. Anthony presided. Although the clippings are not dated, judging from the subject matter, the scrapbook was compiled around the turn of the twentieth century.

Series 7. Artifacts, 1866-1897 primarily includes wooden and tin boxes, leather portfolios, and other cases in which the documents were originally stored. Of particular note is the glass eye worn by James O. Whitworth after he lost his in the Civil War.

Subject Headings

Afro-Americans--Georgia--Gwinnett County--Genealogy.
 Bank of Lawrenceville (Lawrenceville, Ga.).
 Brand Banking Company (Lawrenceville, Ga.).
 Farmers--Diaries--Georgia--Gwinnett County.
 Gwinnett County, Georgia.
 Inferior Court--Georgia--Gwinnett County.
 Marriage Records--Georgia--Gwinnett County.
 Superior Court--Georgia--Gwinnett County.
 Tax Records--Georgia--Gwinnett County.
 Whitworth, James O. (1835-1908).
 Whitworth, John Claiborne (1799-1864).
 Whitworth, Richard W. (1790-1857).
 Whitworth, Robert B. (1861-).

Folder List

Series 1. Microfilmed Volumes, 1821-1897

<u>Reel</u>	<u>Book</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date(s)</u>
1	1	Gwinnett Inferior Court Minutes	1866-1875
2	2	Gwinnett Inferior Court Tax in Kind	1863-1865
	3	Gwinnett Inferior Court Execution Docket Book B	1843-1867
		Marriage License for Free Persons of Color, Book B	1866-1884
3	4	Gwinnett Superior Court Execution Docket & Miscellaneous Docket Book	1873-1876
	5	Gwinnett Superior Court Docket Book	1835-1841