



# The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

## **Bryant family papers**

1809-1989 [bulk 1824-1901]

MssCol 421

Compiled by Melanie Yolles, March 1987. Additional materials were integrated into the collection by Robyn Hjernstad, July 2015.

### **Summary**

**Creator:** Bryant family

**Title:** Bryant family papers

**Date:** 1809-1989 [bulk 1824-1901]

**Size:** 2.2 linear feet (6 boxes)

**Source:** Received from the estate of Wilberforce Eames, 1937, with additional purchases.

**Abstract:** Members of the Bryant family were descended from Peter Bryant (1767-1820) and Sarah Snell Bryant (1766-1847) of Cumington, Mass., and included the poet William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) and his brothers, who settled in or around Princeton, Ill. The brothers were primarily involved in farming in the area. The collection consists of correspondence and other personal papers of various members of the Bryant family. Correspondence is with family members, friends and business associates and concerns pioneering and farming in Illinois and Kansas, Cullen Bryant's life as a West Point cadet, family affairs and finances, and discussions of politics, particularly slavery and the Civil War. Also, diaries, manuscript poems of John H. Bryant, land papers, photographs and other family memorabilia, and printed matter.

**Preferred citation:** Bryant family papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

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### **Creator History**

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## Scope and Content Note

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## Key Terms

### Subjects

Agriculture -- Illinois  
Agriculture -- Kansas  
Military education -- United States  
Pioneers -- Illinois  
Pioneers -- Kansas  
Real property -- Illinois  
Real property -- Kansas  
Sharecropping -- United States  
Slavery -- United States

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Cookbooks  
Diaries  
Photographs

### Geographic Names

Illinois -- History -- 1778-1865  
Kansas -- History  
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865  
United States -- Politics and government -- 1815-1861

### Names

Brown, E. R.  
Bryant, Cullen  
Bryant, Cyrus  
Bryant, Elijah  
Bryant, John Howard.  
Bryant, Julia Sands, 1831-1907  
Bryant, Louisa C.  
Bryant, Marcus  
Bryant, Peter, 1767-1820  
Bryant, Sarah Snell, 1766-1847  
Bryant, William Cullen, 1794-1878  
McVay, Kate Bryant.  
McVay, William E.  
Olds, Justin Hixon.

## Container List

### Correspondence (2 boxes)

- b. 1 Peter Bryant (1767-1820) 1813
- b. 1 Sarah Snell Bryant 1835-1846
- b. 1 John H. Bryant 1848-1901
- b. 1 Elijah Bryant 1855
- b. 2 Cyrus Bryant 1824-1865
- b. 2 Cullen Bryant 1859-1864, 1874
- b. 2 Peter and Marcus Bryant 1854-1875, 1906
- b. 2 Justin Hixon Olds and Louisa C. Bryant Olds 1836-1842
- b. 2 Sylvia Drake 1853
- b. 2 Elijah Fish 1864

### Other Papers (1 box)

- b. 3 Manuscript poems by John H. Bryant
- b. 3 *The Life and Poems of John Howard Bryant by E. R. Brown* 1894
- b. 3 Notebook: Communications to the Cumrnington Society of Husbandmen and Manufacturers 1824
- b. 3 Cyrus Bryant's Singing Book 1825
- b. 3 Land Papers and Sharecropper Contracts 1834-1861
- b. 3 Legal papers prepared by Cyrus Bryant as court clerk, Bureau County circuit court 1839-1861
- b. 3 School compositions of Peter and Cullen Bryant
- b. 3 Photographs
- b. 3 Account Book 1833-1834
- b. 3 Diary of Louisa C. Bryant Olds 1837

## Bryant Family papers, Additions

Additions contain correspondence, manuscript poetry and essays, a diary, land deeds, photographs, newspaper clippings, and printed material. The vast majority of the papers belonged to John Howard Bryant and the family of his granddaughter, Kate Bryant McVay.

John H. Bryant's papers include 28 incoming letters, 1833-1901. Among them are 13 letters, 1836-1874, from his brother William Cullen Bryant; 7 letters, 1889-1897, from his close friend and biographer E. R. Brown, and letters from his uncle Ebenezer Snell, sister-in-law Frances F. Bryant and her daughter Julia S. Bryant (the wife and daughter of William Cullen Bryant); John Bigelow; William Jennings Bryan, and Charles Dudley Warner. William Cullen Bryant's letters relate details of family health and travels, discuss political news, his land in Illinois, and include disparaging remarks about New York City, transcendentalist poetry, and several newspapers. E. R. Brown's letters concern his farm and business, lectures he gave, J. H. Bryant's poetry, the gold standard, and his annoyance with organized religion, the Mafia, and temperance cranks.

Included also are holograph manuscripts of his poetry, several land deeds, other certificates and documents, and two letters to his grandson-in-law, William E. McVay. McVay was married to Bryant's granddaughter, Kate, the daughter of his youngest son, Elijah Wiswall Bryant, and his wife Laura Smith. The papers contain typescripts of three essays or lectures (circa 1903) by McVay, a letter to Kate Bryant from Spaulding Bartlett, and her high school report card, 1885.

Papers of other family members include an 1809 diary kept by Bryant's mother, Sarah Snell Bryant, a facsimile of a letter of his father Dr. Peter Bryant (1820), a photograph album and loose photographs of members of the extended Bryant family (including the McVay, Bannister, Curtis, and Smith families), printed material from Bryant family reunions and celebration, and newspaper clippings. Also present is a manuscript cookbook that belonged to Frances Fairchild Bryant; and letters written by Franny Bryant Godwin; her husband, Parke Godwin; and Frances Fairchild Bryant. These letters are accompanied by handwritten transcriptions.

- b. 4 f. 1-16 Correspondence and Manuscript Material 1809-1989
- b. 5 f. 1-4 Printed Material 1850-1938
- b. 5 f. 5-6 Photographs circa 1810-1890
- b. 6 f. 1 Photograph Album 1820s-circa 1900