

Transcript of a letter¹ from William Jones Kittrell² to his brother, Pleasant Williams Kittrell³, dated 13 October 1859

Camden Oct 13th 1859

Dear Bro.

Upon my return from Missⁱ a few days since after an absence of nearly 3 weeks I found yrs of the 1st Ult⁴ awaiting me, and now avail myself of the first favorable opportunity to reply I regret that circumstances beyond my control rendered it out of my power to take the trip to Texas⁵ that I had in view About the time I proposed starting, my family became sick and there was more or less sickness in the county and I was getting some practice, and it is a matter of great desire and importance with me to neglect no opportunity to secure a respectable standing in that way I have a better practice this year than any previous one since I have been here ___ nothing to boast of tho at best ___ but think I shall succeed in placing myself^{3^d} on the list of competitors

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if I have not already done so Every Physician except one has been here longer than I have and yet I have taken the lead of 2 that have been in long practice here This has been a generally healthy year During the month of August and the latter part of July and 1st Sept the most of the sickness has occurred I had notwithstanding fully determined if the sickness abated to make the trip this fall, as I thought that Ben⁶ would be at home, and I could leave the business in his hands But when he reached home the 1st August, he expressed to me his intention of attending a course of medical lectures, in N Orleans this fall and winter, and as I found I could not make the trip from the time I could get off (being compelled to be here at court) and return before he should leave, I reluctantly had to abandon the idea of making the trip this year I cannot safely leave the business in the hands of a clerk + Ben seems so reluctant

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to forego the opportunity of taking a course of lectures now as he has the means (of his own earning) to do so, and seems to be well prepared, having been reading assiduously for some time I went out to Missⁱ to accompany Mollie⁷ She had made an engagement to take a school in Carroll and entered upon engagement on 3^d inst⁴ She gets \$40 per month + her board. Sallie⁸ commenced a school at Newtown Academy in Monroe County on 1st Sept She gets \$700 pr session Ben is now at home having completed his 3^d session at Spring Hill about 1st Aug He designs attending a course of lectures this winter and will clerk for me until next fall and attend a 2^d course with a view to graduation This I advise him to do before attempting to practice as I know from experience the great disadvantages a first or one course [person] labors under in making his way Bro the question of moving to Texas has seriously exercised my mind for the last 2 years and it was that that prompted me to contemplate

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a trip this fall I have done nothing more than make a tolerably decent support here The drug business does not pay as well here as I anticipated We have not only to compete with neighboring drug stores but with Mobile also and in many articles with the dry goods merchants of the place and consequently the profits are very small The business here is strictly a retail one and I stand now after 4 years hard struggling but about \$1000 a head I have now a [unrecovered] offering to buy me out and think it probable I shall sell I know a better location in Missⁱ both for a drug store + practice My object in moving to Texas would be to get land for my children but if I were to invest my spare means in that I would have nothing left to set myself up in any other business as I have no force to cultivate the land⁹ I never was so nonplussed in my life what to do Would be thankful to you for some suggestions to help me to a conclusion No room or time for more Write soon Yr Bro affy Wm

Yr letter was missent to Camden Missⁱ [Written in the left margin of the page]

A LEGAL ATTACHMENT¹⁰

Believe me Bess, when I declare
A title deed's my heart
And you the party of the first,
And I the second part.

That I have an attachment true
Is useless quite to mention ;
In vain I seek to serve you and
Arrest your sweet attention.

You know you owned some love for me
When I the question mooted,
But now it seems to me you act
As if you were non-suited.

My case is one in equity
I've pleaded with precision ;
You know the points; why will you then
So long reserve decision?

I make no dilatory plea ;
I'm driven to distraction!
Unless I soon obtain relief,
I'm sure I shall take action.

At first a civil suit I'll bring
At Cupid's special session ;
And there, a plaintiff lover, ask
For Judgment by confession.

Now don't demur when this you read,
But own you feel compunction,
For I my suit will prosecute
In spite of your injunction.

And if, my judgment in despite,
You will not hear me still,
I'll get an order from the court
T' administer your will.

I trust you'll file an answer-brief
To this, my declaration,
Or else I shall proceed to make
A cross-examination.

Endnotes

1. The letter is now in the collection of Don C. Stone. The letter is written on a large piece of paper, folded vertically giving four pages, each approximately 7 1/8 by 9 1/4 inches. There is a circular embossed mark in the upper left corner of page 1 which reads “DURAND & C^o LONDON within the circular outer edge of the mark, and 2^d CLASS diagonally through the middle of the mark. The reverse of this embossing can also be seen on the upper right corner of page 2. The transcription was completed on 11/24/08 by Catherine M. Stone using the guidelines at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/true/about/transcriptions.html>.
2. William Jones Kittrell (b. 1813 in Chapel Hill, Orange County, NC—d. about 1 October 1863 at Camden, Wilcox County, AL) was the seventh child and fourth son of Bryant and Mary Norman Kittrell. He married Elizabeth Martha Cain on 6 February 1835 in Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa County, AL. They had nine known children. He was a teacher and later a physician.
3. Pleasant Williams Kittrell (b. 13 April 1805 in Chapel Hill, Orange, NC—d. 29 Sept 1867 in Huntsville, Walker County, TX) was the third child and second son of Bryant and Mary Norman Kittrell. Pleasant Williams Kittrell married first, [Mary?] Anna Pegues Evans. Following her death, he married Mary Frances Goree, daughter of Langston Goree, in Greene County, AL on 12 Oct 1847.
4. Ult is an abbreviation for *ultimo*, a latin term meaning “in the month immediately preceding,” which in this case would have been 1 September. (*Ancestry's Concise Genealogical Dictionary*. Harris, Maureen and Glen, compilers. Salt Lake City, Utah:1989, p 212.) On page 4 of this letter, he uses the term inst, an abbreviation for instant, meaning “the same as is given”, in this case meaning the 3rd of October. (Ibid., p. 118.)
5. Two of William Jones' siblings had moved from Greene County, AL after being enumerated there on the same page in the 1850 U.S. census on December 16th. Dr. Pleasant Williams Kittrell and his family and slaves had moved to Texas and settled in Walker County, Texas near Huntsville. Their sister, Sarah “Sallie” Williams Kittrell Goree (b. 26 April 1807 in Chapel Hill, Orange, NC—d. 17 June 1903 at Midway, Madison, TX) the fourth child and second daughter of Bryant and Mary Norman Kittrell, and her husband Langston Goree and their family and slaves, also moved to Texas at the same time, settling near the Kittrells in Madison County.
6. Ben was Dr. Benjamin Franklin Kittrell (b. 24 Dec. 1837 near Greensboro, Greene, AL—d. 27 April 1897, Black Hawk, Carroll, MS), the first child and oldest son of William Jones Kittrell and Elizabeth Martha Cain Kittrell. He completed medical studies in New Orleans and then in the fall of 1861, joined the Black Hawk Rifles, Company G, 22nd Mississippi Regiment, Featherston's Brigade, Loring's Division, Polk's Corps, Army of Tennessee, CSA and was appointed Assistant Surgeon (Military Annals of Carroll County, MS (Expanded), W. F. Hamilton & Betty Wiltshire, compilers, Carrollton, MS: Pioneer Publishing Co., 2004, p 53-61). He married Maud Narcissa Pate on 24 April 1866 at Hard Times, her parents' estate in Carroll

County, MS. He was a prominent physician in Mississippi, served as Director of the Mississippi State Medical Board in 1884 and 1885, and was a fellow of the Mississippi Medical Association and a permanent member of the American Medical Association. (*The Physicians and Surgeons of the United States*, William B. Atkinson, M.D., ed. Philadelphia, Pa. : Charles Robson, 1878, p. 460.)

7. Mollie was Mary Norman Kittrell Craig (b. 17 Nov 1842 in MS—d. 31 Aug 1921, Dallas, Dallas County, TX), the second daughter and third child of William Jones Kittrell and Elizabeth Martha Cain Kittrell, married Emmet English Craig (b. 29 July 1842 in Orrville, Dallas County, AL—d. 2 April 1891 in TX) on 20 October 1867 in Orrville, Dallas County, AL. By about 1872, the couple and their two children were living in Greenville, Hunt County, TX. (1880 U. S. Census, Hunt County, Texas, population schedule, Greenville Precinct1, p. 427-A (stamped), dwelling124, family 124, E. E. & M. K. Craig, digital image, *HeritageQuest.com* (<http://www.heritagequest.com>), accessed 15 November 2008; citing NARA microfilm publication T9, roll 1312, page 427-A.)

8. Sallie was Sarah Bryant Kittrell West (b. 9 April 1839 at Shongalo, Carroll County, MS—d. 29 January 1880 at Talladega, Munford County, AL) was the oldest daughter and second child of William Jones Kittrell and Elizabeth Martha Cain Kittrell. Sarah Bryant Kittrell married Anson West (b. 3 September 1832 in Robeson Co., NC—d. 3 July 1906) on 4 January 1866 in Camden, Wilcox County, AL. In order, the other children of William Jones Kittrell and Elizabeth Martha Cain Kittrell were: William Patrick Kittrell (b. about 1845 in MS—d. 22 August 1891 in Atlanta, Fulton County, GA; Charles Kittrell (b. about 1847 in Dayton, Marengo County, AL—d. 6 April 1858 in Camden, Wilcox County, AL); Bryant Jones Kittrell (b. 13 November 1849 in Dayton?, Marengo County, AL; Laura Williams Kittrell (b. February 1854 in AL—d. 29 May 1939 in Columbus, Franklin County, OH); Alice Herndon Kittrell (b. 2 November 1857 in Camden, Wilcox County, AL—d. 2 Oct 1877 at Winona, Montgomery County, MS); Robert Norman Kittrell (b. 8 February 1960 in Camden, Wilcox County, AL—d. 18 May 1900 in Memphis, Shelby County, TN).

9. William Jones Kittrell owned 3 slaves at the time this letter was written, who were not ages particularly suitable to be field hands, and were not enough labor to work the land on a farm. In the 1860 Alabama Slave Census for Wilcox County he owned 1 female age 30, and 2 boys ages 12 and 10. After his death in 1863, the November 1863 inventory of his estate included 3 slaves who likely were the same 3—Peggy a female age 33 or 35, Henry age 14 and Aaron age 12.

10. This poem, a clipping from an unknown newspaper, was an enclosure in the folded letter. It probably was meant to amuse the reader with its clever use of legal terms in a non-legal context. Dr. Pleasant Williams Kittrell, an 1822 graduate of the University of North Carolina, a medical doctor trained at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, was also elected and served as a legislator in 3 different states: North Carolina, Alabama, and Texas.