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DOCUMENTATION OF LETTER, E. SEAY TO MR. BRYANT

Without date or complete names and signature, identification of the persons named in the letter would appear to be difficult. The letter is included in the Elvira (Ella) H. SEAY papers, but does not appear to be written by Ella SEAY.

Elvira (Ella) H. SEAY (ca. 1844-1901) was the daughter of John H. SEAY and Elvira WILLIAMS. [Census 1880, Lynchburg, VA, National Archives and Records Service, T-9, Roll 1358, p. 301, Household 128, Family 174; "Marriage of John H. Seay and Elvira Williams, daughter of Jehu Williams," *Lynchburg Virginian*, 23 January 1843, p. 3 col. 2.] Dr. John H. SEAY died 30 December 1887 and was buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery, Lynchburg, Virginia. [Lynchburg Daily Virginian, 31 December 1887, p. 1 col. 4; Lynchburg Daily Virginian, 1 January 1888, p. 4 col. 3.] In the letter, "E. SEAY" writes "[father's] remains were deposited in their last resting place at Spring Hill Cemetery on Saturday." [Letter, E. Seay to Mr. Bryant, The Ella Seay Papers, MS1471, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, VA.] Thus it would appear that E. SEAY and Elvira (Ella) SEAY are not the same person.

The letter appears to have been written by Elvira (WILLIAMS) SEAY and describes the death of her father, Jehu WILLIAMS, in 1859.

Jehu WILLIAMS

Jehu WILLIAMS, son of Jesse WILLIAMS and Elizabeth Rachel GOTT was born 16 October 1788 in Culpeper County, Virginia. He moved to Lynchburg ca. 1813, where he worked as a silversmith in partnership with John VICTOR. He married Hattie (Hettie?) ROW of Spotsylvania County on 25 December 1814. After her death, he married 11 September 1823 Susanna Sanford TOMPKINS. He married thirdly Eliza J. ROBINSON on 2 August 1847. WILLIAMS died in Lynchburg on 31 March 1859. [George Barton Cutten, *The Silversmiths of Virginia from 1694-1850* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1952), p. 71; Marriage bond, Jehu Williams and Susannah S. Tompkins, Marriage Register No. 1, Lynchburg, VA, p. 22 (Bond dated 10 September 1823); "Marriage of Jehu Williams and Eliza J. Robinson," *Lynchburg Virginian*, 12 August 1847, p. 3 col. 4.]

The information given in the obituary of Jehu WILLIAMS corresponds with the information given in the letter of "E. SEAY."

"Jehu WILLIAMS...died at his residence in this city on Thursday night last." [Obituary, *Lynchburg Daily Virginian*, 2 April 1859, p. 3 col. 1. "Thursday night last" would have been 31 March 1859.]

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DOCUMENTATION OF LETTER, E. SEAY TO MR. BRYANT (Contd)

"Late on Thursday afternoon he said 'Children I must go now'...he breathed his last which occurred at 1/4 past 11 o'clock that night." [Letter, loc.cit.]

"Mr. W. had been in feeble health for several months past." [Obituary, loc.cit.]

"For 5 or 6 weeks his sufferings had been greatly increased..." [Letter, loc.cit.]

"For many years he had been an humble and devout member of the Methodist Episcopal Church." [Obituary, loc.cit.]

Jehu WILLIAMS is listed among the "founders" of the Court Street Methodist Church (Methodist Episcopal Church, South), ca. 1850. [Alfred A. Kern, *Court Street Methodist Church 1851-1951* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1951), p. 8.]

"The funeral will take place this morning at 10 o'clock." [Obituary, loc.cit. Newspaper is dated Saturday, 2 April 1859.]

"His remains were deposited in their last resting place at Spring Hill Cemetery on Saturday. He requested that his two wives (our mothers) might be removed & laid beside him." [Letter, loc.cit.] Jehu WILLIAMS, born 11 October 1788, died 31 March 1859, was buried in Spring Hill Cemetery on 2 April 1859, in Section U, Lot 134, Grave No. 1. [Tombstone inscription, burial record, Spring Hill Cemetery, Lynchburg, VA. The stone is quite weathered and this may account for the difference in the date of birth. (See: Cutten, *Silversmiths*, loc.cit.)]

Susan S. (TOMPKINS) WILLIAMS, born 10 June 1801, died 7 October 1843, was buried in Spring Hill Cemetery on 14 April 1859, in Section U, Lot 134, Grave No. 2. Hetty (ROW) WILLIAMS, born 25 February 1792, died 9 March 1823, was buried in Spring Hill Cemetery on 14 April 1859, in Section U, Lot 134, Grave No. 3. [Ibid. Burial on the same date indicates that the two wives were removed to Spring Hill Cemetery. The burial record does not indicate the original place of burial. Grave No. 1, the grave of Jehu WILLIAMS, is located between the graves of the two wives.]

Mr. BRYANT/Amanda

Wilson P. BRYANT married Amanda WILLIAMS, daughter of Jehu WILLIAMS, in Lynchburg in 1837. [Marriage Register No. 1, Lynchburg, VA, p. 60 (Bond dated 24 October 1837).]

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The marriage record of John H. SEAY and Elvira WILLIAMS, daughter of Jehu WILLIAMS, in 1843, includes "W[ilson?]. P. B[ryant?]." as one of the witnesses. [*Ibid.*, p. 81 (Bond dated 19 January 1843).]

It would thus appear that Elvira (WILLIAMS) SEAY is writing to her brother-in-law, Wilson P. BRYANT, at the request of her sister, Amanda (WILLIAMS) BRYANT.

Mr. MANNING

"Mr. MANNING our pastor" would appear to be Rev. Jacob MANNING, pastor of Court Street Methodist Church in 1859-1860. [Letter, *loc.cit.*; John J. Lafferty, Sketches of the Virginia Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Richmond: *Christian Advocate*, 1880), p. 29.]

Dr. John H. SEAY and Elvira (WILLIAMS) SEAY were also among the "founders" of Court Street Methodist Church. [Kern, *Court Street Methodist*, *loc.cit.*]

Jamie

"Jamie" appears to be James T. WILLIAMS, son of Jehu WILLIAMS and Susanna Sanford TOMPKINS. He was born in Lynchburg 28 April 1829. He moved to Richmond in 1855 where he was partner in the firm of Tinsley, Tardy and Williams, later Tardy and Williams. He returned to Lynchburg in 1867. [Obituary, James T. Williams, *Lynchburg News*, 26 April 1900, p. 8 col. 3.]

"On the day before [Jehu WILLIAMS] died, Jamie arrived. Father said, 'I am glad you have come, my son, we are all together again...'" [Letter, *loc.cit.*] This would appear to indicate that Jamie (James T. WILLIAMS) had been out of town (i.e., Richmond).

Hetty

Hetty WILLIAMS, daughter of Jehu WILLIAMS and Hettie ROW [and sister of Elvira (WILLIAMS) SEAY], was born in Lynchburg ca. 1823. She married 28 April 1863 Richard H. GILLIAM in Lynchburg. [Cutten, *Silversmiths*, *loc.cit.*; Marriage Register No. 2, Lynchburg, VA, p. 25 (Age of Hetty WILLIAMS at time of marriage was 40 years, which would give a birth year of ca. 1823).]

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Dr. PATTESON

John H. PATTESON, physician, was born ca. 1797 in Buckingham County, Virginia. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he practiced medicine in Lynchburg, Virginia, from ca. 1815 until his death on 20 April 1864. "He felt himself as much at home in many homes in Lynchburg as he did in his own domestic circle...In a critical case he would not leave the house, day or night, and has been known to stay thus by the bedside of his patient as long as ten days..." ["Medical Fraternity: Dr. John H. PATTESON," *Lynchburg News*, October 1900, in Patterson-Patteson Families, FF3394, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, VA.]

In the marriage record of Jehu WILLIAMS and Susannah S. TOMPKINS, John H. PATTESON is listed as security and witness. [Marriage of Jehu WILLIAMS and Susannah S. TOMPKINS, loc.cit.]

Dr. John H. PATTESON is also listed as a "founder" of Court Street Methodist Church. [Kern, *Court Street Methodist Church*, loc.cit.]

DATE OF LETTER

John H. PATTESON, the physician who attended Jehu WILLIAMS, died 20 April 1864. In the letter, Elvira SEAY writes, "I can't tell you how deeply we feel indebted to him [Dr. PATTESON], especially as he has still had a tender consideration for us & **drops** in at night as he has been so long accustomed to do." [Letter, loc.cit. Emphasis added.] The use of the present tense would appear to suggest that Dr. PATTESON was alive at the time of the writing of the letter and would suggest a period of between April 1859 and April 1864.

In the opening sentence, "Amanda has requested me to write you an account..." [Ibid.] would seem to suggest that the letter was written a short time after the death of WILLIAMS in 1859.

CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence presented, it would appear that the letter to "Mr. BRYANT" was written by Elvira (WILLIAMS) SEAY, ca. 1859.

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ELLA SEAY (1844-1901) PAPERS

The collection includes a letter from Elvira (WILLIAMS) SEAY (1821-1897) to Mr. [Wilson P.] BRYANT about the death of her father, Jehu WILLIAMS (1788-1859). It also includes an unsigned memorial praising Elvira (Ella) H. SEAY (1844-1901), daughter of Joseph H. SEAY and Elvira WILLIAMS; a resolution, dated 1901, from the Woman's Home Mission Society (Memorial Methodist Church, Lynchburg) expressing sorrow over their loss of Ella SEAY; and a poem entitled "Suddenly" written by Marianne FARMINGHAM, presumably written at the death of Ella SEAY.

Dear Mr. Bryant,

Amanda has requested me to write you an account of the last days of our precious Father, because it was my privilege to be nearer to him on almost every occasion when he seemed inclined to converse & consequently I heard more distinctly than the others, the comforting assurances he gave of his entire readiness for the change. Of his fitness for a better world you know there could not have been a doubt, for during the whole course of my life I cannot call to mind a single instance of his shrinking or turning aside in any way from anything he considered a duty & it is a great comfort to look back upon his life & feel that he daily gave evidence that he was living the life of a christian. No wonder then, that his end was peace.

For 5 or 6 weeks past his sufferings had been greatly increased & on Wednesday of the week before he died, his disease seemed to change in some degree & he suffered greatly with nausea as indeed he continued to do with little intermission until the close of his life. Our ministers were very attentive to him & in conversing with them he invariably assured them that he had no fear, but would rather feel more joyful in prospect of death. Mr. MANNING our pastor (whose conversation was particularly comforting & soothing to him) on one occasion asked him if there was any particular thing he wished him to pray for. He answerd [sic] that he had always doubted the propriety of asking to be relieved from suffering, but if it was no harm he would like him to pray for some cessation of pain that his mind might be more composed & that he might have brighter views of his approaching end. Mr. M. assured him it could be no harm & reminded him that the Savior himself in his mortal agony cried out "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

At another time after he had given all necessary directions about his interment he said he would like to collect all his friends around to take a last farewell - then turn over & cease to be; but if it was right that he should continue to suffer he was willing. On Sunday night he conversed freely with his family & told us that he not only had no fear of death but that the only thing that disturbed him at all, was that he had not had time to straighten up his old books & he feared they would have trouble with them.

On the day before he died Jamie arrived. Father said, "I am glad you have come my son, we are all together again & are as happy & joyous as possible under the circumstances." In a few minutes after he said this he said, "I feel a strange stillness different from anything I ever felt before. Is it death?" I went to the foot of his bed & asked him where the stillness was. He placed his hand upon a part of his body where he had suffered most excruciating pain. I asked "Is death deprived of its terrors?" He answered "Yes - thank God." I then said, "And you have the victory." He answered "Yes - thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ." He then had himself laid straight on his bed & appeared to be dying & remained in that condition 5 or 6 hours, all of us gathered around him expecting every moment to be the last.

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Mr. MANNING came & he evidently recognized his voice tho' his eyes were closed. Mr. M. repeated "How blest the righteous when he dies." Father assented - then "Jesus can make a dying bed" &c. again he inclined his head with a smile - late in the evening he took a little water which revived him & about night fall he consented to take more. While I went for it he appeared to forget it. I asked him if he would take it: Hetty remarked "he doesn't know you." I said "Yes he does, dont you father?" He opened his eyes & gave me such a precious look, such as a glorified being might be expected to give & said "Why yes, it is Elvira ain't it? God bless her & bless you all children. I wish in recognizing her I could give expression to the great peace I feel. To think of having gone thro' one's whole lifetime & coming to enter upon another life so grand, so majestic, and so momentous."

Jamie then spoke to him. He said, "I am glad to see you my boy, & wish I was able to converse with you, but you can converse with God daily which is far better." He was delirious most of the night & next day being occasionally overcome with paroxysms of pain. He talked a great deal, but incoherently so that we could not understand much that he said.

Late on Thursday afternoon he said "Children I must go now." & he seemed to call first one & then the other by name: but tho' conscious himself he could not speak so as to be understood. The violence of his pain seemed to subside awhile before he breathed his last which occurred at 1/4 past 11 oclock that night.

His remains were deposited in their last resting place at Spring Hill Cemetery on Saturday. He requested that his two wives (our mothers) might be removed & laid beside him. I have thus imperfectly attempted to convey to you an idea of the end of the perfect man, but it is impossible for me to do him justice or for mortal pen to describe the "Great Peace" he looked & felt in view of his eternal reward. "May our last end be like his."

I cannot close without mentioning how faithfully & patiently & indefatigably, Dr. PATTESON has attended Father throughout his entire sickness. His uniform cheerfulness, gentleness & tenderness have been Father's stay & comfort thro' all his protracted sufferings. The sound of his voice soothed him in his most intense sufferings & I can't tell you how deeply we feel indebted to him, especially as he has still had a tender consideration for us & drops in at night as he has been so long accustomed to do.

E. SEAY

[Paragraphs added for ease of reading.]