

BEVERLY PRYOR NANCE FAMILY LETTER

The letter was discovered in 1978 in a shoebox in the Nance family homestead house. Dola Searcy-Thompson, MD donated the transcript for this exhibit. Beverly Prior Nance wrote the letter to his two brothers, William Rice Nance and James Blanton Nance. In it he describes how families became separated by the Civil War and how hard it was for them to stay in touch.

Around 1855, the William and Blant moved from Tennessee to homestead land of about 350 acres near Ten Mile Creek in Saline County, Arkansas. Dola Searcy Thompson recalls stories that her grandmother, Lucy Nance-Searcy, told about the war. Yankee soldiers came to the house and stole the canned food and stored meat because they were so hungry. The soldiers did not harm any of the family. Lucy's father, James Blanton Nance is buried in the cemetery at the Ten Mile Creek Baptist Church.

Contact Donna Dunnahoe at The Fine Arts Center of Hot Springs for more information.

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Webster, Texas

Sept 27th 1868

To: Mr. W.R. Nance, Hot Springs Co, Ark.

Dear Brother

Your favor of 20th Aug was read yesterday and read with pleasure, or at least part of it. I was glad to hear that you and Blant are well & appear to be doing well, but was sorry to learn of mothers situation before she died,— I will here say that as to myself when the war was ended, I was in Mississippi and without money and only one way to get to Texas. I had learned in Mississippi that Dr. Fouche had moved to Illinois as he was staying out of the war and myself and the balance of mother's sons was in the army, I thought he would surely pay some attention to mother (him and Mary both gave me reason to think he would), and I thought mother had gone to live with them after the Yankees had got possession of East Tenn. Mary had said she invited her to do so, — with this impression I embraced the only chance I had of getting to Texas, supposing the move would continue in the Trains Mississippi department. There was no mails in Texas for nearly 12 months after the war and the only way of sending letters was to find some one going to Jefferson of Shreveport, Lou, — as soon as could I wrote a letter to Simon Boggers engineering what had become of mother. I never received any answer. I wrote one letter to Mother directed to Athens. I also wrote one too Cousin Emma Nance supposing Mary to be in Illinois, I never got an answer to any one of them. If I had went to see mother at the surrender of the army in Miss. I could not have done much for her but I would have went had I known her situation, when the war closed, I had just recovered from 8 months confinement from wound's received in Georgia. I had all my things stolen while I was in the Hospital suffering with Gangrene, I had 2 good horses stolen , my saddle Bridle and my trunk broke open and rifled. I regret most that I did not sell my only remaining horse and go to see mother, or see if she had gone to Illinois with Fouche, but it is too late now.

I have been farming this year. I have made a tolerable good crop. I sold good last year and as there was a failure in the cotton crop, our concern declined remaining the stock of goods as the people had nothing to buy with. We may commence again this fall, though they have not decided yet. I have an offer to sell goods next year in two other houses I don't know yet what I will follow. I wish you and Blant to do well. You must use industry and economy. I have made some money but have always been a spendthrift—I think I will reform in that particularly. I am engaged to the sweetest and most amiable girl you ever saw, 12 years younger than myself. She belongs to one of the nicest families in the country. If nothing happens it will come off in two or three months. She often asks me why I say so little about my relatives and if I never write them, — I will tell her her now that I have no home and the family is scattered probably never to be united, and that I feel am alone and isolated in the world. As I set alone tonight in my room and think of my boyhood, how we used to set around the fire with our widowed mother, in our humble home in Tennessee, it call up feelings that language cannot express, these are scenes and days that are gone to return no more. I know that I was never a very good brother. I had many faults but I always loved the family and my other relatives more than I seemed to. Let us forgive all past wrongs (if there be any) and -----ing hearts-----meet and encourage-----has in store for us, and let us always act honestly and honorably and never be a disgrace to our family by doing and low or disgraceful act.—I read a letter from Lewis a few days ago. I will answer it soon. I write to him directly after I got your last letter. Tell Blant to write. I intend this letter for him as well as yourself.

Give my love to his wife. I would like to see her. I would not advise any man to leave good country to come to any part of Texas I have seen, but if you should ever come out here I will be glad to see you.

Write soon,

Yours most truly,

B.P. Nance