

**MS-137, Totten Family Papers**

**Collection Number:** MS-137

**Title:** Totten Family Papers

**Dates:** 1811-1962, (bulk 1910-1962)

**Creator:** Totten family

**Summary/ Abstract:**

Consists primarily of correspondence of three generations of the Totten Family in Springfield, Ohio, and Yellow Springs, Ohio, from the early 19th through the 20th century.

**Quantity/ Physical Description:** 4 linear feet

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Special Collections and Archives, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-0001, (937) 775-2092.

**Restrictions on Access:** There are no donor-imposed restrictions on accessing materials in this collection.

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**Preferred Citation:**

[Description of item, Date, Box #, Folder #], MS-137, Totten Family Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio

**Other Finding Aid:**

The finding aid is available on the Special Collections & Archives, Wright State University Libraries web site at <https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms137.pdf> . It is also available in the OhioLINK Finding Aid Repository at <http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/>.

**Related Material:**

MS-135 Alice Griffith Carr Papers  
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms135.pdf> )

MS-117 Derostus F. Ladley Papers  
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms117.pdf> )

MS-138 Oscar D. Ladley Papers  
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms138.pdf>)

MS-139 Jerusha Hall Peacock Papers  
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms139.pdf>)

MS-140 Oscar Edwin Carr Papers  
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms140.pdf>)

MS-155 Ladley/ Carr/Totten/Harris/Odiorne/ Families Photographs  
(<https://libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms155.pdf>)

**Acquisition:**

The Totten Family Papers were accessioned into Wright State University's Special Collections and Archives in March 1982. They were donated by the Totten family's cousins, Corrine Odiorne Pelzl, Eva Odiorne Sullivan, and Ken Odiorne.

**Processed By:** This collection was processed by Barry McCarty in June 1984. Finding aid updated according to DACS standards by Allie Edmonds and Toni Vanden Bos in 2018.

**Arrangement:**

The collection is arranged into 4 series as follows:

- Series I: Chelnissa Totten Papers, 1880-1944
- Series II: Alice Ladley Totten Papers, 1865-1934
- Series III: Jonathan H. Totten, William Emerson Totten, Martha Totten Papers, 1811-1916
- Series IV: Bessie L. Totten Papers, 1883-1962

**Historical Note:**

The Totten family as represented in this collection centers on **Bessie L. Totten**, who was born in 1876 and died in 1963. Bessie was the daughter of Dr. W. Emerson and Alice Ladley Totten. She attended Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, graduating in 1900, before becoming Assistant Librarian at Antioch, where she would spend her entire career. Bessie founded the Antiochiana collection of historical records and artifacts in 1905, and witnessed the collection grow over her years with the library. In 1941, Bessie retired, but assumed the title of Curator of Antiochiana, which she held until her death in 1963.

In the 1900 United States Census, Bessie is listed as living with her Aunt and Uncle, William and Mary Carr in Yellow Springs. Bessie's adult cousins were also living in the household at the time. They were Catherine L. Carr, Alice G. Carr, and Oscar E. Carr.

**Alice Ladley Totten** was the mother of Bessie Totten. Alice was born in 1846, the daughter of Derostus and Catherine Ladley. As a young woman Alice too, had attended Antioch College. She was a resident of Yellow Springs and Springfield, Ohio. Alice married **Dr. William Emerson Totten** in 1872, and in 1876 Bessie was born. Later in life, Alice made her home with Bessie. Alice Ladley Totten died on September 26, 1933 in Xenia, Ohio.

Dr. William Emerson Totten's father was **Jonathan Howell Totten** (born 1809 in Maryland), and his mother was Mary Greer (born 1820). William Emerson's siblings were **Martha Jane Totten (known as Mittie)** born in July 1845, and **Chelnissa Totten** (known as Nissa) born December 28, 1848. Martha and Chelnissa were Bessie Totten's aunts.

**Martha Totten** married Edward Bretney and had a daughter, Beatrice, and a son, Bernard.

**Chelnissa Totten**, lived in Springfield, Ohio on Limestone Street. Later correspondence dated 1909 shows her residence as Lebanon, Kentucky. Nissa lived the majority of her life in Asheville, North Carolina. The correspondence also indicates that she remained single throughout her lifetime. Chelnissa Selina Totten died August 16, 1944 in Lebanon, Kentucky.

### **Scope and Content:**

The collection contains four series, arranged by Totten family member. Within each series, the papers are arranged chronologically. Note, in pencil on many of the letters, are notes made by Bessie Totten describing the family relation and contents.

**Series I: Chelnissa Totten Papers, 1880-1944**, is the second largest segment of the Totten Family Papers. Correspondence is particularly heavy during the World War II years of 1940-1944. This collection contains correspondence mainly in the form of personal letters and postcards. There are some pictures, but very little business correspondence. Included is an autograph book from 1879-1881.

**Series II: Alice Ladley Totten Papers, 1865-1934**, is the third largest segment of the Totten Family Papers. Correspondence is most frequent during the 1900 to 1904 time period. The nature of the collection comprises mostly of personal letters. Alice Ladley is the mother of Bessie L. Totten, whose papers are in Series IV. There is one undated file at the end of the Alice Ladley Totten Papers.

**Series III: Jonathan H. Totten, William Emerson Totten and Martha Totten Papers, 1811-1916**, is the smallest series of the entire collection. The individual files of Jonathan H. Totten (Bessie's grandfather) contain personal and business correspondence dating 1835-1864. The files of William Emerson Totten (Bessie's father) contain personal correspondence dating 1865-1884. The file of Martha Totten contains personal letters dating 1863-1866. Of note in this series is the ciphering book of Jonathan H. Totten dated 1816. Included in this series are three folders of genealogical notes and early family papers spanning 1811-1916. These folders contain correspondence from various family members and family friends, and contain some of the earliest family history in the collection.

**Series IV: Bessie L. Totten Papers, 1883-1962**, makes up the bulk of the Totten Family Papers. Correspondence is especially plentiful for the years 1923, 1936, 1941, and 1962. This series contains correspondence in the form of business letters and personal letters, with some postcards and pictures. Bessie is the daughter of William Emerson Totten and Alice Ladley Totten. There are three undated files in the back of the Bessie L. Totten collection.

**Subject Terms:**

**Persons/Families**

Totten family -- Manuscripts.  
Tuten family  
Totten, Bessie L., 1876-1963  
Totten, Alice Ladley, 1846-1933  
Totten, Chelnissa, 1848-1944  
Totten, Martha, 1845-  
Totten, William Emerson  
Totten, Jonathan H., 1809-

**Organizations**

Antioch College -- History

**Places**

Yellow Springs (Ohio) -- History  
Springfield (Ohio) -- History

**Material Types**

Correspondence  
Postcards  
Photographs  
Autograph album

**Collection Inventory:**

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
<b>Series I. Chelnissa Totten Papers</b>			<b>1880-1944</b>
<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1880-1889
1	2	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1890-1894
1	3	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1895-1899
1	4	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1900-1904
1	5	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1905-1909
1	6	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1910-1911
1	7	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1912-1914
1	8	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1915-1919
1	9	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1920-1929
1	10	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1930-1937
1	11	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1938-1939
1	12	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1940
1	13	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1941
1	14	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1942

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	15	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1943
1	16	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	1944
1	17	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten	undated
1	18	Correspondence to Chelnissa Totten (includes autograph book)	1879-1881, undated
<b>Series II. Alice Ladley Totten Papers</b>			<b>1865-1934</b>
<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
2	1	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1865-1879
2	2	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1880-1884
2	3	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1885-1889
2	4	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1890-1894
2	5	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1895-1899
2	6	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1900-1901
2	7	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1902-1904
2	8	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1905-1909
2	9	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1910-1924
2	10	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	1925-1934
2	11	Correspondence to Alice Ladley Totten	undated
<b>Series III. Martha Totten, William Emerson Totten, and J.H. Totten Papers</b>			<b>1811-1916</b>
<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
2	12	Correspondence to Martha Totten	1863-1866
2	13	Correspondence to William Emerson Totten	1865-1869
2	14	Correspondence to William Emerson Totten	1870-1874
2	15	Correspondence to William Emerson Totten	1875-1884
3	1	Correspondence to J.H. Totten	1835-1849
3	2	Correspondence to J.H. Totten	1850-1854
3	3	Correspondence to J.H. Totten	1855-1859
3	4	Correspondence to J.H. Totten	1860-1864
3	5	Early family papers and Genealogical Notes	1811-1916, undated
3	6	Early family papers and Genealogical Notes	1845-1905
3	7	Early family papers and Genealogical Notes	1850-1904
3	8	Jonathan H. Totten Ciphering Book	1816
<b>Series IV. Bessie L. Totten Papers</b>			<b>1883-1962</b>
<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
4	1	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1883-1888
4	2	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1889-1899
4	3	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1900-1906
4	4	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1907-1908
4	5	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1909-1910
4	6	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1911-1912
4	7	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1913-1916
4	8	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1917-1920
4	9	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1921-1922
4	10	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1923
4	11	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1923
4	12	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1924-1926
4	13	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1927-1928
4	14	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1929-1930
4	15	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1931-1932
4	16	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1933
4	17	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1934
5	1	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1935
5	2	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1936
5	3	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1936
5	4	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1937-1938
5	5	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1939
5	6	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1940
5	7	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1941
5	8	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1941
5	9	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1942
5	10	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1943-1946
5	11	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1947-1948
5	12	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1949-1950
5	13	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1951-1952
5	14	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1953
6	1	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1954-1956
6	2	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1957-1960
6	3	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1962
6	4	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1962
6	5	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	1907-1951
6	6	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	undated
6	7	Correspondence to Bessie L. Totten	undated