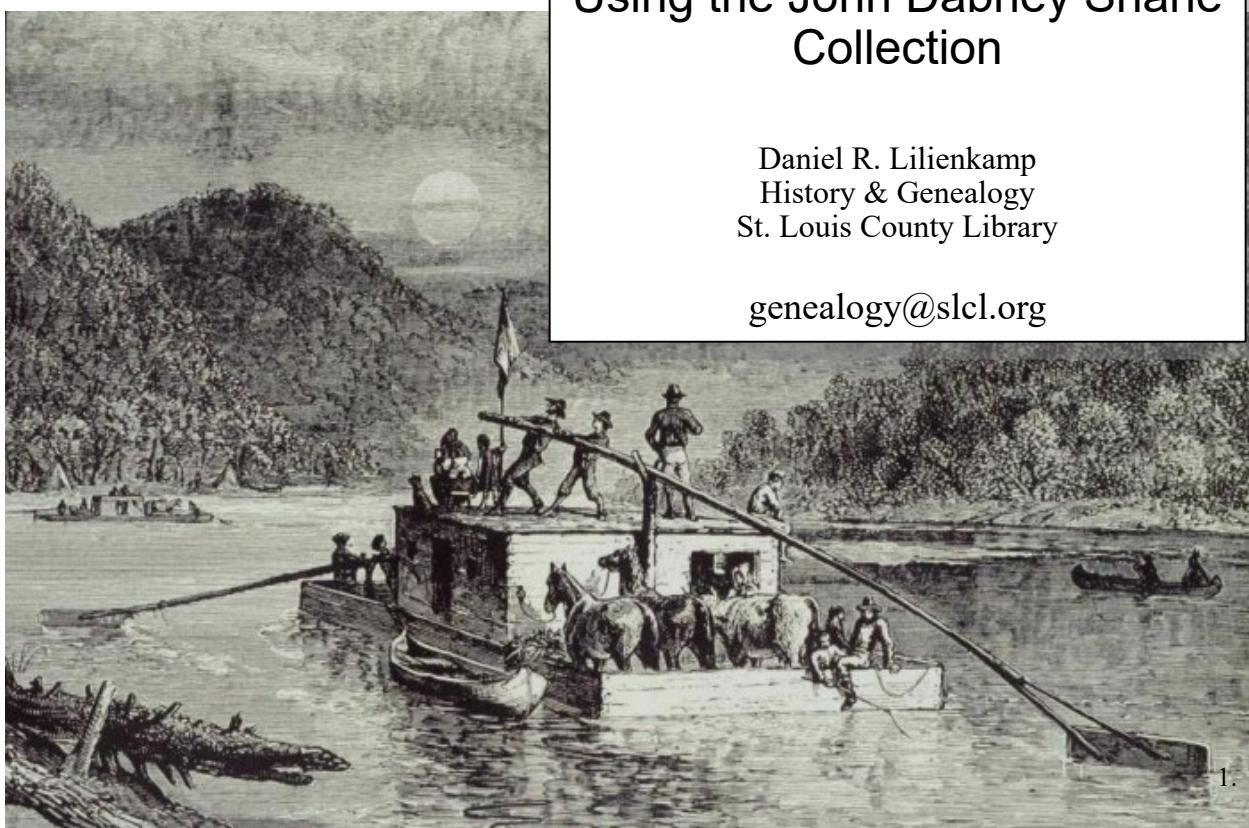


Ohio Valley Pioneers: Using the John Dabney Shane Collection

Daniel R. Lilienkamp
History & Genealogy
St. Louis County Library

genealogy@slcl.org



1.

John Dabney Shane, an early minister and leader in the Presbyterian Church, was born in Cincinnati in 1812. He attended Hampden-Sydney College in Hampden-Sydney, Virginia where he graduated in 1834. He then studied theology in the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Following licensure in 1842 by the Presbytery of Cincinnati in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., he went to Kentucky where he served several churches in the Presbytery of West Lexington. In his spare time he devoted himself to the study of history, with a particular interest in the disappearing pioneer societies of Kentucky and Ohio.

Surprisingly very little is actually known about Shane's life. While not as famous as Abraham Lincoln, Henry David Thoreau, or even Lyman Copeland Draper, he left records of his role in the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky and Ohio. Articles and books about him and his collection continue to be written today.

What we do know comes from two sources: Draper includes a brief note on the Shane family in his manuscripts², and a reprint of a biographical sketch written by Rev. Joseph M. Wilson, reprinted in the *Filson Club Historical Quarterly*.³ The former source names his parents as Henry Shane (12 Jun 1789-1859) and Nancy Williams (June 1795-14 Sep 1812). Siblings are named Adam, Lafayette (18 Oct 1830-?), Samuel, Henry Jackson, Mary Jane Cook, Henrietta (dead), and Samuel Williams (15 Oct 1826-?). Mrs. A. F. Mulford is named in Shane's death notice as his sister. Many postulate that Carlos Shane, author of a piece about a trip along the Oregon Trail found in the Shane manuscripts is another brother, but no hard evidence exists one way or the other.

An unsourced tree on Ancestry proposes different parents and siblings. It names his parents as John D. Shane (29 Dec 1785-3 Jul 1854) and his mother as Mary (Polly) Cosby (28 Feb 1782-15 Jul 1844). It also names three siblings, Franklin D. Shane, Carlos Walstein Shane, and Araminta E. Shane⁴.

Shane adopted methodologies similar to his more famous contemporary, Lyman Copeland Draper. He collected and transcribed documents, clipped newspapers, and conducted interviews. Unlike Draper, however, Shane's interests included the social-historical aspects of pioneer life. He collected information on religion, education, business, and other aspects of pioneer life beyond the exploits of military leaders and early settlers.

At the time of his death, 7 February 1864, Shane had compiled his collection into at least 17 volumes of notes and several boxes of loose papers. These, along with his other possessions were sold at auction. In 1864, Draper purchased eleven of these volumes and incorporated most of them into his own collections. These are now part of the Kentucky Papers. Rev. Samuel Agnew purchased 2 volumes and the loose papers for the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia. Draper eventually sold some of what he purchased that didn't fit into his collection scheme to the Presbyterian Historical Society. John Day Caldwell, the first librarian of the Cincinnati Public Library, purchased at least two of the volumes. These are in the Cincinnati History Library and Archives.

SHANE MANUSCRIPTS INCLUDED IN THE DRAPER MANUSCRIPTS

According to Dr. Josephine Harper in her *Guide to the Draper Manuscripts*, "Volumes 11CC-19CC, 26CC-30CC, and 36CC-37CC comprise a major portion of the Papers of John D. Shane (1812-1864) acquired by Draper at auction after Shane's death."⁵ Further analysis of the *Guide* indicates the documents primarily come from Bourbon, Clark, Fayette, Franklin, Jessamine, Shelby, Woodford, Bath, Fleming, Montgomery, and Nichols Counties, Kentucky; Adams, Brown, and Clermont Counties, and the City of Cincinnati, Ohio; and the states of Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin. Yet, all of these are found in Draper's Kentucky Papers!

Mable Clair Weeks of the Wisconsin Historical Society (the repository for the Draper Manuscripts) prepared a *Calendar of the Kentucky papers of the Draper Collection of Manuscripts*⁶ in 1925. This volume lists all of the documents in the series chronologically (hence the name calendar) and provides a name index in the back of the book. The index makes the searching easy, because it refers to the front part of the book, which in turn indicates a specific volume and page number on the original volumes. History & Genealogy has the complete set of the Draper Manuscripts on Microfilm, as well as the guide, the calendar series, and other resources.

Over the years many people have produced derivative works from the Draper Manuscripts. An example is the three volumes by Dale Payne, *Frontier Memories*⁷, *Frontier Memories II*,⁸ and *Frontier Memories III*.⁹ In each of these the author transcribes interviews from the original documents (and provides citations for finding the originals). Many people find these typed transcriptions easier to read and search, but a good genealogist will always go back to the original regardless of the quality of the transcription.

For more information on the Draper Manuscripts, see *Finding Your Ancestors in the Draper Manuscripts*.¹⁰ Also see the video presentation on History & Genealogy's Virtual Classroom,¹¹ V-03 | Pioneers of Greater Appalachia: Research in the Draper Manuscript Collection or the same video on the library's YouTube channel.¹²

SHANE MANUSCRIPTS AT THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN PHILADELPHIA

Many people, when they hear the term "John Dabney Shane Manuscripts," immediately jump to the collection at the Presbyterian Historical Society to the exclusion of anything else. This confusion probably arises because this collection, unlike any of the others, bears Shane's name. They then tend to assume the information contained therein to be of lesser genealogical and historical value than the portion in the Draper Manuscripts. Draper's notes on Shane's materials up for auction describes much of what ended as this collection as of "small value" or "nearly all trash."¹³

We need to remember the old saying, "one person's trash is another's treasure." Remember Draper's approach to history centered around the actions of a few great men. If the papers did not concern Daniel Boone, Simon

Kenton, George Rogers Clark, or someone similar, Draper was not overly interested. In other words, he did not really care about your ancestors except as they related to these important historical figures.

Most genealogists would be delighted to find church membership lists from frontier Kentucky providing birth, marriage and death information about each of the members. Similarly, how valuable are burial records from a long closed cemetery once located in what is now downtown Cincinnati? These are exactly the sort of thing you might find in these manuscripts.

Seven finding aids of varying usefulness have been created over the years to help researchers access the collection. Five of them are somewhat problematic as they at best reference the box and file number but not the microfilm collection. These five inculde:

1. List of Shane Papers Made by Thos. C. Pears Jr.¹⁴ This list does not include code names or indicate a roll of microfilm.
2. An article in the Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society¹⁵ apparently created before filming and does not include microfilm information.
3. An article in the *Filson Club Quarterly*¹⁶ that also predates filming.
4. An article in the Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society¹⁷ that predates filming.
5. Information on the Presbyterian Historical Society's webpage¹⁸ that references box and folder numbers but not the microfilm.

The other two finding aids were created to help researchers access the records through the microfilm, These tools are increasingly important because FamilySearch has digitized the microfilms. These are:

1. William K. Hall's *The Shane manuscript collection: A Genealogical Guide to the Kentucky and Ohio Papers*¹⁹, provides an overview of the Shane Manuscripts at the Presbyterian Historical society and then describes the contents roll by roll.
2. The staff of History & Genealogy at St. Louis County Library created the [John Dabney Shane Manuscript Collection Finding Aid](#)²⁰. Each item on every reel has been identified and briefly described. The items are listed in the order they appear on the film.

SHANE MANUSCRIPTS AT THE CINCINNATI HISTORY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

The Cincinnati History Library and Archives has at least two and possibly as many as three additional volumes of the Shane volumes in their collection. Writing in *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*,²¹ Mary Peers Foley identifies two of the volumes located in the collection Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio. [This organization is a predecessor body of the Cincinnati History Library and Archives.] Likewise, in *Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley*,²² Elizabeth Perkins describes a volume that appears to be from Shane in the collection of the Cincinnati Historical Society. [also a predecessor of the Cincinnati History Library and Archives].

The descriptions of the volumes in the two sources do not appear to match, leading to the speculation that there are three of them. Unfortunately the finding aid to the John D. Caldwell Papers at the library is not detailed enough to resolve the question. A trip to the archive may be in order.

FINAL THOUGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Like any manuscript collection, the John Dabney Shane Papers can be challenging to use. In this case, even their location adds to the challenge as they are spread across at least three archives. Nevertheless, they are a vital resource for Ohio Valley researchers, particularly in Kentucky and Ohio. Finding aids and guides to the various parts of the collection may somewhat ease the difficulty.

Because of Shane's social-historical approach to history, they may also contain facts and information not typically found in other records about our ancestors. A search through these manuscripts may be a very rewarding experience for many researchers.

NOTES:

1. Waud, Alfred, Wood engraving of group of people along with horses onboard a flatboat as they travel down a river under a moonlit sky. Created between 1855 and 1890. Published in The Century Magazine (volume 92, May to October, 1916). [In the Public Domain.]
2. Draper, Lyman Copeland, *Draper Manuscript Collection*, "The Kentucky Papers." 15 CC 214.
3. Rothert, Otto A, "Shane, the Western Collector," *Filson Club Historical Quartlery*. 4:4 (January 1930) pp 1-16.
4. Ancestry Library Edition, Public Member Trees, "Price-Hobson Tree," (<https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/48490903/person/20119381299/facts?ssrc=>) accessed 29 Sep 2021.
5. Harper, Josephine L., *Guide to the Draper manuscripts*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, p135. SLCL Call no. R 929.3 H294G or 929.3 H294G OCLC no. 56461941
6. Weeks, Mable Clair, compiler, *Calendar of the Kentucky papers of the Draper Collection of Manuscripts*. Owensboro, Ky. : Cook & McDowell Pub., 1925. SLCL Call no. R 929.3 S797C or 929.3 S797C OCLC no. 09685751 (also digitized on FamilySearch (www.familysearch.org/library/books/idurl/1/202963) accessed 7 Oct 2020).
7. Included in *Frontier Memories III*. (See note 9 for the citation.)
8. Payne, Dale, compiler, *Frontier memories II: Rev. John Dabney Shane Interviews as Taken from the Draper Manuscripts*. Fayetteville, WV: Dale Payne, 2007. SLCL Call no. R 976.9 F935 OCLC no. 156874884
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10. Lilienkamp, Daniel R., *Finding Your Ancestors in the Draper Manuscripts*. (<https://www.slcl.org/sites/default/files/Draper%20Manuscript%20Collection%20guide.pdf>) accessed 30 Sep 2021.
11. History & Genealogy Virtual Classroom. (<https://www.slcl.org/genealogy/virtual-classroom>) accessed 30 Sep 2021.
12. Pioneers of Greater Appalachia: Research in the Draper Manuscript Collection, YouTube Video. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Z1-30Yzwdc>) accessed 30 Sep 2021.
13. Hesseltine, William B and Garz, Larry. "Lyman C. Draper and the Shane Papers," *Filson Club Historical Quartlery*. 27:4 (October 1953) p327-333.
14. Pears, Thos. C. Jr., *List of Shane Papers*, (Shane Microfilm Roll 1, FamilySearch Film 498614.)
15. Turner, Joseph Brown, "A Catalogue of the Manuscript Records in the Possession of the Presbyterian Historical Society," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 8:1 (March 1915) pp. 13-22. (Copied on Shane Microfilm Roll 26, FamilySearch Film 498639.)
16. Rothert p. 13-15 . (Copied on Shane Microfilm Roll 26, FamilySearch Film 498639.)
17. Staples, Chas. R. "New Discoveries Amongst Old Records," *Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society*, 33:105 (October 1935) pp. 307-325. (Copied on Shane Microfilm Roll 26, FamilySearch Film 498639.)
18. Presbyterian Historical Society. "Guide to the Shane Collection" (<https://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/research-tools/guides-archival-collections/rg-196>) accessed 4 Oct 2021.
19. Hall, William K., *The Shane manuscript collection: A Genealogical Guide to the Kentucky and Ohio Papers*, Galveston: Frontier Press, 1990. SLCL Call no. R 976.9 H181S OCLC no. 23174419
20. History & Genealogy, John Dabney Shane Manuscript Collection Finding Aid. (https://www.slcl.org/sites/default/files/HG%20John%20Dabney%20Shane%20Collection_0.pdf) accessed 4 Oct 2021.
21. Foley, Mary Peers, "More Notes on the West by the Rev. Shane" *Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society*, 52:179 (April 1954) pp.111-113.
22. Perkins, Elizabeth A., *Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998 p193. SLCL Call no. R 977 P448B OCLC no. 37368528



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