

Frances Cabaniss Roberts Collection: Series 1, Subseries C, Box 14, Folder 7

Cabaniss, Septimus D. to Hooper[?], Dr. P.O., 1886

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CPC 3C14 ①
re Tate, John M. Insanity in Arkansas
by Cabaniss, Septimus

Huntsville Ala January 14 1886

Dr P.O. Hooper
State Lunatic Asylum
Little Rock Ark

Dear Sir

I have your favor of 8th Inst in regard
to John W Tate. Since replying to your former
letter I have had several lengthy epistles from
and also, rec'd under cover of a letter from Alfred
& Wellborn a letter addressed to A.C. Wellborn and
W.B. Wellborn of date Dec 19/85 by John W Tate

In your last letter you say of him that "Nine
persons out of ten would say after an interview
with him, that there was nothing out of the way
with him", that statement of yours and his dispo-
sition to brood over imaginary wrongs to himself
and his hallucinations as to delugious crimes
committed by others strengthen my conviction
that he should not be permitted to go on for
a to be beyond your control unless in the
care of a reliable custodian -

Yours In his letter to his late guardian he says

Names:

Hooper, P. O., Dr.

Tate, John W.

Wellborn, Alfred C.

Wellborn, W. B.

Places:

Huntsville, AL

Types:

correspondence

Dates:

Jan 14, 1886

CPC
re Tate, John M. 1014
by Cabaniss, Septimus

Insanity in Arkansas }

burthen, or otherwise provide for his safety & comfort -
I think it due to A.C. Wellborn to say, that I am
informed that soon after he received the first (about
which I do complain in all of his letters) he made
inquiry of Dr. Forbes as to any thing needful
for the comfort of his uncle and received
a reply that he was fully supplied -
Alfred in a recent letter to me said that he
knew of no cause for his uncle's pro-
secution against him - Only a short while before
the time he claimed to have received the "divine
blessing" of prophecy (May 6, 1883) he contemplated
(as he wrote to me) buying for himself & A.C. le
Wellborn the farm of Eben Wellborn near
Marion Ark & committing the same to the
charge of Alfred Wellborn whilst he would
lodge with Alfred, but he employed as a
clock maker at \$500 a year - I must
term this as evidence of his hallucination
in regard to Alfred's attempt upon the virtue
of Mrs. Tate has arisen since his confinement
in the Asylum - I am now satisfied that he
was then insane but I had not had any previous
intimation of it -

Names:

Forbes, Dr.
Tate, John W.

Tate, Mrs.
Wellborn, A. C.

Wellborn, Alfred
Wellborn, Elias

Wellborn, Mefna

Types:

correspondence

CPC 3014 ②
re Tate, John M. Insanity in Arkansas
by Cabaniss, Septimus

to the statement in my letter to you that he was
perjudiced without cause against him (A. C. Wellborn)
and details circumstances all of which are no
doubt unfounded, that convince him of the
fruitless effort on the part of A. C. W. to seduce
his wife - and yet a month or two before he found
evidence that you had commissioned him as a peep
-st (I think believing he was a confederate spy
1883) he wrote to me asking me saying that he and
his nephew A. C. Wellborn contemplated making
a joint purchase of Elias Wellborn farm near
Harold Ark, the farm to be treated to the manage-
ment of his nephew under his advice, whilst
he would get employment in Missouri at \$800
per annum, & that he did not wish me to add
any more of the shame of himself or his
nephew to Arkansas, but to return it
to be taken by Wellborn in buying a farm
in this county - The latter seemed rational
and though making arrangements to others
& with his nephew, until I received
a nice letter from him announcing his

Names:

Wellborn, A. C.

Wellborn, Elias

Types:

correspondence

CPC 1014 ①
re Tate, John M. Insanity in Arkansas
by Cabanis, Septimus

I feel thankful to you and Mrs Hooper
for your kindness towards my unfortunate
nephew, and will be pleased to have
an occasional letter from you in
regard to him if you can get leisure
to write. You may do so without fear
of having any more dissertations upon
him any imputed upon you.

I thank you for the information you
communicate in regard to my dear
friend Mrs W. Leonard & her family

Respectfully
S. D. Cabaniss

Names:

Cabaniss, S. D.

Curnal, W.

Hooper, Mrs.

Types:

correspondence

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Cabaniss, Septimus D. to Hooper[?], Dr. P.O., 1886

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CPC 3014 ①
re Tate, John M. Insanity in Arkansas
by Cabaniss, Septimus

1

Huntsville Ala Jan 15/86

Dr P.O. Hooper
Little Rock Ark

Dear Sir - I have your favor of 8th Inst. in regard to John M. Tate - Since replying to your former letter I have also had several long letters from him, addressed to me, and one addressed to his nephews A.C. Wellborn & W.B. Wellborn, of date Dec 17, enclosed to me, by A.C.W. his late guardian -

These letters tend to confirm ~~my~~ ^{my} opinion expressed to you, that his insanity is taking a different phase and one calculated to cause ~~me~~ more trouble than his religious hallucinations -

It is my recollection, that Mord an eminent French Physician & author, states that insane persons afflicted with such religious hallucinations as he to date, inquisition of Lunacy, not in frequently meet in general mania of the most deplorable character - I have not his work, nor seen ~~it~~ now before me, the work in which Mord will be quoted - I think it was a note appended to Wharton

Names:

Hooper, P. O., Dr.

Tate, John W.

Wellborn, A. C.

Wellborn, W. B.

Places:

Huntsville, AL

Types:

correspondence

Dates:

Jan 15, 1886

CPC 1014 ⑦
re Tate, John M. Insanity in Arkansas
by Cabaniss, Septimus

2
Stille's Medical Jurisprudence -
You state that "nine persons out of
Ten, women, after an interview with Tate
would say, that there was nothing "out of the
way" with him" - That circumstance satisfies me
that he should not be permitted in his present
condition to go so far from the grounds of
the Asylum as to make it impracticable for
you to have him return, whenever commanded.
His letters are replete with accusations
against others of great wrong to him and of
felonious crimes against deceased relatives
& other deceased friends -
Instances, in the past, have come under
my own observation in which Monomaniacs
would by their great earnestness and minute
of detail, ~~convey~~ ^{as to the truth} persons of fair intelligence
with a belief of ~~exceedingly~~ ^{as to the truth} absurd stories,
related by them, of crimes committed by
innocent persons - or of transactions which
they suppose themselves to have had that
would inevitably result in fabulous
wealth to them -
You say that Tate is free from any thing
like homicidal mania - I have seen nothing
in his letters ~~showing~~ ^{showing} any tendency in

Names:

Stille, Wharton

Tate, John W.

Types:

correspondence

CPC 3C14
re Tate, John M. Insanity in Arkansas
by Cabaniss, Septimus

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that direction, I can see suppression in one of his letters,
(not now before me) in which he said that sooner
than do certain things he would die a glorious
death - It followed some complaints against
some of his family connections -

But during the first year or two after his confinement
(though he would occasionally complain
briefly of his being unjustly confined), he letters
^{manifested} a spirit of true Christian charity towards
all mankind - Now they are replete with
accusations of a criminal character or baseness
of trait and gross falsehoods or immorality.

It then not ground to apprehend that there
may be a further change? - If he can so readily
impress him out of ten with a belief that
he is sane, I apprehend that he may impress
the lovers of scandal with a belief in the
truth of his statements in regard to the com-
mission of the high crimes & misdemeanors
that he complains of, and that some of
them, may by imprudent or malicious re-
marks, stimulate him to avenge his image
many wrongs, or that, ^{he} may fancy, that he
is (Cicero-like) divinely inspired, and
consequentially to punish those who in his

Types:

correspondence

CPC
re Tate, John M. 1814 ②
by Cabaniss, Septimus

Insanity in Arkansas]

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has escaped the penalties of human laws;
Or may incite our envious or malicious per-
sons to institute prosecutions, supposing to
prove them by his testimony. But if such
things should not occur, if he continues
in his present disposition to detail his
scandalous stories about others & at the
same time have cunning enough to con-
ceal his other symptoms of insanity, his
opportunities of circulating them, should
not be enlarged by travel -

These apprehensions are excited ^{as much} ~~more~~ by cases
that have occurred under my close observations
during the last fifty years ^{as} ~~them~~ by reading
the opinions of ~~writers~~ on insanity -

I regret to learn that he is usually to labor
in the grounds of the Asylum - Perhaps, there
are some kinds of games that would wean
him from his mania for writing -

I had indulged some hope, that if he would
become interested in reading & copying decrees
of the Supreme or Chancery Courts ~~that would~~

Types:

correspondence

CPC
re Tate, John M.
by Cabaniss, Septimus

3C14 ⑤

Insanity in Arkansas]

5-

if it should not have a healing influence &
otherwise, it might excite his ambition to
become a great lawyer -

You inform me that you ^{hardly} think that
he would make an accurate copyist - I write
- less big that when you have leisure, you will
test it by asking him to copy something
for you - In his recent letter he informs me
of having obtained the legal opinion of
John F. McBride as to a course of proce-
ding, by which he can see out a writ of
habeas Corpus & ~~how~~ test the validity of
of the engagement had at Helena Ark
- how to copy that for you -

I note what you say as to your unwillingness
to practice a deceit upon him in the manner
suggested by me - I think I must have been
unhappy (in my haste) in the wording of my
suggestion - It was this idea I wished to suggest
that to try the experiment, some compensation
of a trifling character should be proposed
if he would do the work well, if he should

Names:

McDavid, John J.

Types:

correspondence

CPC
re Tate, John M.
by Cabaniss, Septimus

1814

Insanity in Arkansas

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success & seemed pleased with that kind
of labor & the Clerk of the Court should
prefer to be unwilling to pay a reasonable
compensation to be preserved for him,
it would be better to have the compensation
supplemented by his guardian out of
the money in court here & than to in-
duldge him in nursing his hallucinations
unless he is to be ^{informed of} hopelessly insane.
If like Woodson he could be restored
to sanity by fostering a hope of his recovery
from his pecuniary embarrassments,
I think the granting of such a deed, would
be a very "pious fraud".

I omitted in my letter of 15th to state that my un-
fortunate old friend Woodson after a
-lapse of four or five years, by reason of some
-domestic trouble or pecuniary reverses
again became insane & did not resist
the inquisition & verdict of lunacy and
soon after died -

Tate in his last letter renounces
a wish to have a guardian appointed in
Arkansas, and beseeches me to have
a guardian appointed here - does not want
consider him a delusion of Statute

Names:

Tate, John W.

Woodson,

Types:

correspondence

CPC 3014 ⑦
re Tate, John M. Insanity in Arkansas
by Cabaniss, Septimus

Phillips County - I apprehend that you would perhaps consider it incompetent with your office of Superintendent of to become the guardian - It was suggested to me by W. B. Wellborn - I can see no reason why however why a resident of Little Rock might not be appointed by the Court in Phillips County unless expressly prohibited by Statute -

A guardian appointed here could become the guardian only of his estate and not of his person; and could be compelled to traverse the estate, only to a ~~some~~ guardian appointed in Arkansas - It would be a useless expense to incur the costs & commission attending two guardianships - When I thought of a guardianship it was because W. B. Wellborn declined to go by me Ark & my ~~only~~ ^{prudent} object was to have one appointed here so that the money might be put out at interest - If he were competent to change his domicile he could not gain admission into the Asylum in this state without a bond to pay his expenses, and he has no relatives here whose circumstances to assume such a

Names:

Wellborn, W. B.

Types:

correspondence

CPC 3014 ⑦
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Phillips county - thinks he has no friends & many ene-
mies there & that he is the victim of political preju-
dices in part. The suggestion that you should
be appointed his guardian was prompted by W B
Wellborn who from prudential considerations
was unwilling to accept such appointment -
I apprehend that you would regard this as
a compliance by you as incompetent with your
present official position -
At one time when W B Wellborn claimed to
qualify I thought of having a guardian appointed
for John Tate's estate in Ark., in order that the
money in court might be put out at interest
until application should be made for its
transfer to Arkansas by a guardian ap-
pointed there - It is not competent of course
to have the appointment of a guardian of
the person of a non resident lunatic -
can a Senator elect to change his citizenship
from one State to another - Hence he could
not get admission into our Asylum except
as a paying patient - None of his relatives
then are in such condition as to render
it proper for them to be willing to assume the
burden -

Names:

Tate, John W.

Wellborn, W. B.

Types:

correspondence

**Frances Cabaniss Roberts Collection: Series 1, Subseries C, Box 14, Folder 7
Cabaniss, Septimus D. to Hooper[?], Dr. P.O., 1886**

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Frances Cabaniss Roberts Collection

Preferred Citation: Frances Cabaniss Roberts Collection, Archives and Special Collections, M. Louis Salmon Library, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Huntsville, AL.

Collection Scope and Content: The Collection of 114 Linear ft. includes a total of 156 Archival Boxes. The Frances Cabaniss Roberts collection covers the historical records of the Cabaniss Roberts family. This collection contains extensive correspondence records of the Cabaniss Roberts family circa 1830 to 1930.

Archives/Special Collections Access Restrictions: None

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