



ARKANSAS BEFORE STATEHOOD: LITTLE ROCK, NOVEMBER 20, 1829

Introduction

Hiram Abiff Whittington's letters, which he wrote to his brother Granville Whittington in the late 1820s and early 1830s, remain one of the most valuable personal accounts of daily life in Arkansas shortly before Arkansas Territory became a state. Whittington was one of many entrepreneurial men who moved to Arkansas seeking exciting opportunities and new life in what was at the time the frontier of the United States. He was born in 1805 in Boston, Massachusetts, and moved to Little Rock in 1826. He was a skilled printer and book binder and had experience in book trade and publishing. In Little Rock, he worked as a printer with the *Arkansas Gazette* but in 1832 he moved to Hot Springs. He settled there hoping that the spring waters would have a healing effect on his deteriorating health. He opened several businesses, created first lending library in Arkansas, and established a successful political career, eventually serving as a state representative. In 1836, Whittington returned to Boston to marry Mary Burnham. The two moved back to Hot Springs and had six children. Whittington died in 1890 in Hot Springs.

Whittington's letters provide an account into the daily life in Arkansas Territory from a perspective of a white middle class educated man. Access to Whittington's original letters, which are housed at the Special Collections Department of the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, is limited due to the documents' fragility. To make these rare and extremely valuable records more accessible to researchers, educators, and students, Whittington's letters were typed. Activities in "Arkansas Before Statehood" are based on six typescript letters (typed copies of the original letters) selected from a collection of sixteen letters housed at the Center for Arkansas History and Culture in Little Rock (Hiram A. Whittington Papers, 1824-1834, UALR.MS.0157).



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Little Rock, Nov. 20, 1829.

Dear Brother:

I have just received your letter of 23rd ult. and am quite diverted at the manner with which you pass over your inexcusable neglect in not answering my letters. You had good reasons for supposing I had discontinued writing, since you had not answered my two last letters. I admire your tact in throwing blame from your own shoulders on mine, and this is not the first specimen I have had.

I have been thinking you would make a good political Editor, and as it is contemplated to establish another paper in this place, I shall avail myself of my acquaintance with the proprietor, to solicit the post of assistant editor for you. It is to be a whole-hog Jackson paper, but you need not mind that; a change of climate will, in all probability, effect a change of principles.

Nothing strange has occurred here since I last wrote, I am well and have been; our Legislature is in session, but will adjourn in a few days. We have a new Governor, and have had considerable addition to our society here. A Baptist meeting house was built here last summer, and was preached in four or five times when first put up, but since been idle. Girls are scarce, and in no great demand. The people are just getting over the fever and ague, and parties are commencing. We are to have all the members of the Legislature here to-night, and also the Governor and Judges of the Superior Court.

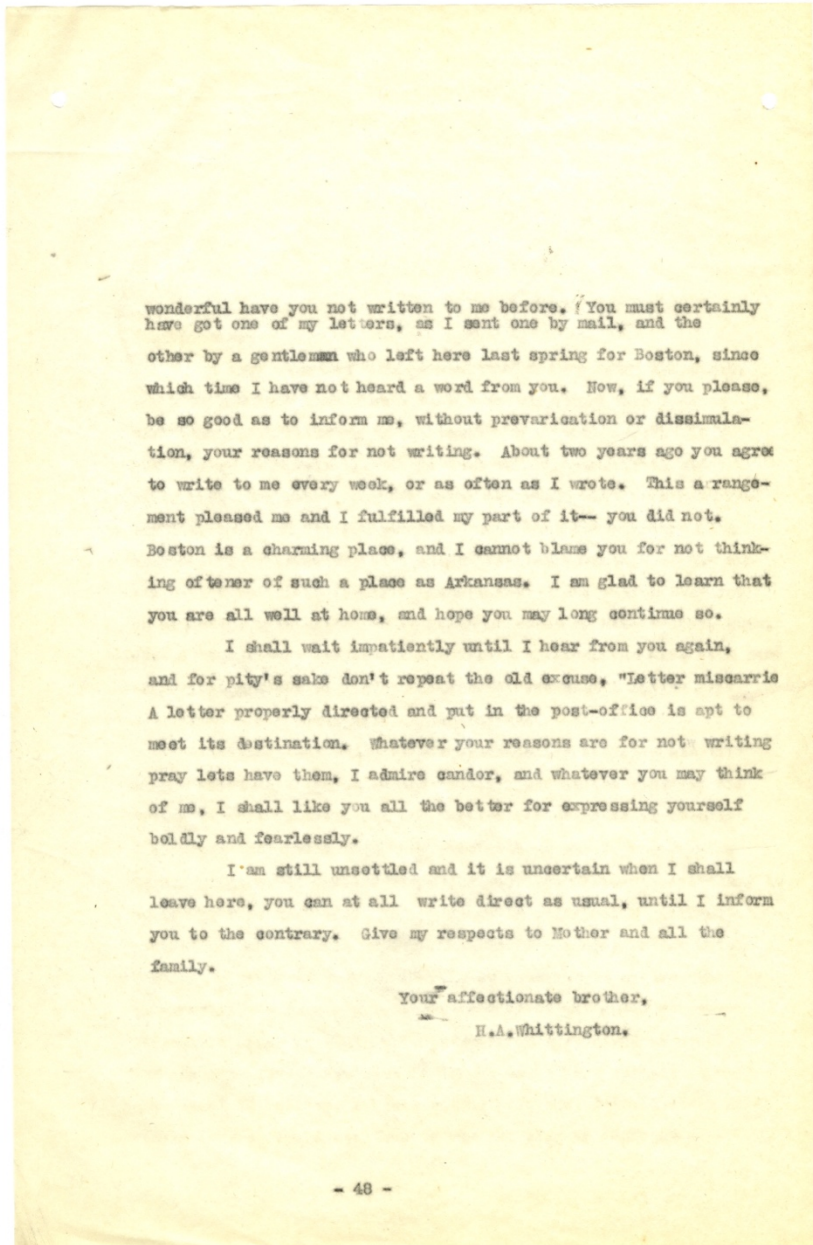
But to return to my subject-- why in the name of all that

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Hiram Abiff Whittington to his brother Granville Whittington, Little Rock, November 20, 1829 (Hiram A. Whittington Papers, 1824-1834), p. 1



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Hiram Abiff Whittington to his brother Granville Whittington, Little Rock, November 20, 1829 (Hiram A. Whittington Papers, 1824-1834), p. 2



Questions:

1. Whittington wrote many letters to his brother and he repeatedly encouraged his brother to join him in Arkansas. He also does it in this letter by promising his brother to help him find a job. What job is that? What does this type of job tell us about new developments in Arkansas Territory?
2. What does it mean that a new newspaper that is planned to be established in Little Rock will be “a whole-hog Jackson newspaper”? Look up the phrase “whole hog” in a dictionary. Who is the Jackson that Whittington mentions? Jackson is a common name so pay attention to the date when Whittington wrote this letter. This will help you find the right Jackson.
3. What do we learn about Arkansas’ political system from Whittington’s letter? Research who was “a new Governor” that Whittington mentions.
4. What do we learn about the society in Arkansas Territory from this letter (e.g., new additions, women, diseases, etc.)?
5. What do we learn about communication between Arkansas Territory and other parts of the United States from this letter? Why do you think Whittington keeps complaining that his brother does not write him enough letters? Could Whittington call or email his brother when the brother did not write him a letter?