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Ben T. Laney papers, 1944-1948

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Ben T. Laney papers
MS.000413

Finding aid prepared by the Arkansas State Archives

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

May 28, 2020

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Arkansas State Archives
One Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas, 72201
501-682-6900
state.archives@arkansas.gov

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Summary Information

Repository	Arkansas State Archives
Title	Ben T. Laney papers
Date [inclusive]	1944-1948
Extent	10.0 Cubic feet 21 boxes
Language	English
Language of Materials	Materials entirely in English.

Preferred Citation

Ben T. Laney papers, Arkansas State Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Biographical/Historical Note

Benjamin Travis Laney, Jr., was born in Jones Chapel, Ouachita County, on November 25, 1896, to Benjamin Travis and Martha Ella Saxon Laney. He attended Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas, leaving to serve in the Navy during World War I. After the war, Laney attended Arkansas Teachers' College and earned his degree in 1924. After graduating, Laney settled in Conway, opening a drugstore with one of his brothers and working in a local bank. On January 19, 1926, he married Ethel Lucile Kirtley, and the couple went on to have three children: Benjamin Travis, Phillip E., and William David. Laney moved to Camden, Arkansas, in 1927, where he farmed and ran several businesses. He was elected Mayor in 1935 and re-elected in 1937. In 1941, Governor Homer Adkins appointed Laney to the Arkansas Penitentiary Board. He would remain there until he was elected Governor in 1944. Laney would go on to be re-elected in 1946, but chose not to seek re-election in 1948.

During his tenure as governor, Laney accomplished several initiatives including the Stabilization Act, which pooled most separate tax funds into one operating fund. Laney also ensured the public school fund increased by more than six million dollars and reduced the number of school districts from 1,500 to fewer than 500. His administration also made provisions for the construction of the Governor's Mansion, War Memorial Stadium, and for the restoration of the Old State House.

In 1950, Laney was frustrated with Sidney McMath and McMath's lack of support for states' rights and chose to run for governor again. He was defeated in the Democratic Primary by Sidney McMath. After his loss, Laney remained in politics taking on a supportive role, helping the re-election campaigns of both Senators John L. McClellan and J. William Fulbright. Laney also managed Winthrop Rockefeller's Arkansas rice farms during the 1960s. In the 1970s, Laney returned to Magnolia. On January 21, 1977, he suffered a heart attack at his home. Laney is buried at Memorial Park Cemetery in Camden, Ouachita County, Arkansas.

Scope and Contents

Ben T. Laney papers contain correspondence, information on boards, commissions, and colleges, sanatoriums and hospitals. Many of these files deal with returning World War II Veterans and reforms.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Arkansas State Archives 07/06/2015

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research use.

Conditions Governing Use

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Kelly Bryant, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Collection Inventory

Box

State Board of Accounting

1

Act 226 of 1945

Aeronautics Department (2)

Agricultural Extension Service

Agriculture and Industrial Commission (2)

A and M College, Magnolia

A and M College, Monticello (3)

Box

Agriculture, Mechanical and Normal College

2

State Apiary Board

Architects Examining Board

Arkansas Hospital and Health Services Survey and Advisory Committee (3)

Arkansas Museum Commission

Arkansas Polytechnic College, Russellville

Arkansas State College, Jonesboro (2)

Arkansas State Teachers College, Conway

Box

Arkansas Tuberculosis Sanatorium (2)

3

Athletic Commission

Attorney General's Office

Auditor

Bank Commission

Barber Examiner's Board

Board of Basic Science Examiners

Bauxite Commission

Blind School

Boiler Inspection Division

Box

Band Refunding Board

4

James "Jim" Boren

Cancer Commission

Governor's Committee on Arkansas Children

State Council on Children and Youth

Chiropody Board

Chiropractic Board

Comptroller's Office

Arkansas Commemorative Commission

Confederate Home (2)

Box

Corporation Commission

5

Cosmetic Therapy Board

Contractor's General Licensing Board

Dental Board

Depository Board

Eclectic State Medical Board

Deaf School

Governor's Emergency Fund

Education Committee

Box

Education Department (5)

5 and 6

Governor's file on education

State Board of Embalmers

Emergency War Bond Fund

Box

Employment Security Division (4)

6 and 7

Director Arkansas State Employment

Highway Department

Board of Registration for Professional Engineers

Fiscal Control Board

Flood Control Commission (2)

Forestry Commission

Box

Game and Fish Commission (2)

7 and 8

Governor's file on Game and Fish Commission

Geologist

Health Board (3)

Henderson State Teacher's College, Arkadelphia

Highway Department

Correspondence

Box

1945 (3)

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1946 (4)

State Hospital (7)

Box

1947 (3)

10

Highway 59

Suggestions concerning highway problem

Box

State Highways (3)

Box 10
and 11

Arkansas History Commission

Homeopathic Board

State Hospital (7)

Box
11 and 12

General (7)

Walter Lowery

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

Independence County Salary Act

Insurance Department

Box

State Hospital (7)

Interstate Oil Compact	13
Labor Department	
Merit System	
Military Department	
National Rivers and Harbors Congress, Washington D.C.	
Oil and Gas Commission	
Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy	
Public Service Commission	
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Publicity Commission	14
Resources and Development Commission (2)	
Revenue Commission (2)	
Selective Service	
	Box
State Police	15

War Memorial Stadium

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

General (2)

Agriculture Department

University of Arkansas Medical School

Veterans Service Bureau (2)

Box

Vital Statistics

16

Arkansas State Vocational Schools

War Memorial Stadium

General

Hot Springs

West Memphis

Welfare Department (3)

Box

Workmen's Compensation Commission

17

Correspondence

Gregg Cherry, North Carolina

St. Francis Levee District

Our Holy Goodwill Endeavor Incorporated

Correspondence

A-D

E-L

Ma

Me-Mi

Mo-Mu

Box

N-O

18

Pa-Pe

Pi-Pr

Q

Oversize Materials

Ra-Ri

Ro-Ry

Box

Sa-Se

19

Sh-Sl

Sm-Sp

St-Su

Ta-Th

Box

Ti-Tw

20

Wa-We

Wh-Wy

Oversize Materials

Box

Corporation Commission

21

Photographs

Controller's Office

Employment Security Division

Aeronautics Department

Roads improved by Pulaski County

Flood Control Commission: Norfork Lake Recreational Area

Arkansas Museum Commission

Bond Refunding Board

A and M College, Magnolia

Photographs

Flood Control Commission

PH.BTLaney.001: View indicating loss of new mown hay from flood of August 27, 1947. It was taken west of Johnson bridge road in Sevier County, Arkansas

PH.BTLaney.002: Mat Brantley holding two ears of corn grown in Dr. R.N. Sherrill's field located 4 1/2 miles south of U.S. highway 70 in the valley of Mountain Fork River, Section 4, Township 7 South, Range 26 East. It is showing typical damage to corn resulting from the flood of August 27, 1947.

Flood Control Commission

PH.BTLaney.003: View of damage to corn field on J.C. Leeper's farm east side of Rolling Fork River west of DeQueen, Arkansas which was caused by the flood of August 27, 1947. This Corn was completely submerged, was soured and is a total loss.

PH.BTLaney.004: View of damage to roadbed, fences and crops west of Rolling Fork River in Sevier County, Arkansas, resulting from Flood of August 27, 1947.

PH.BTLaney.005: View showing damage to recently constructed roadbed on highway 70 west of Rolling Fork River in Sevier County, Arkansas.

PH.BTLaney.006: Concrete pier bridge of Rolling Fork River 3 miles west of Grannis, Arkansas, showing its destruction by flood of August 27, 1947.

PH.BTLaney.007-014: View of section of DeQueen and Eastern Railroad west of Rolling Folk River showing damage done by flood waters on August 27 and 28, 1947. The track was washed out for approximately one-quarter of a mile at this point.

PH.BTLaney.015-016: Bellah Mines bridge over Rolling Fork River southwest of Gillham, Arkansas. This was a steel and concrete bridge, except for wood floor decking and wood stringers and had a span of 372 feet. Completely destroyed by the flood of August 27, 1947.

PH.BTLaney.017: Site of Johnsons bridge over Rolling Fork River showing its complete destruction by the flood of August 27, 1947. This was a steel and concrete bridge, except for wood floor decking and wood stringers and had a span of 280 feet.

PH.BTLaney.018: View of super structure of a bridge over Rock Creek on U.S. highway 70 in Oklahoma near state line west of DeQueen, Arkansas. This was a This was a steel and concrete bridge throughout and was completely destroyed by the flood of August 27, 1947.

Flood Control Commission

PH.BTLaney.019-023: View of a corn field on land owned by Dr. R.N. Sherrill located 4 1/2 miles south of U.S. highway 70 in the valley of Mountain Fork River, Section 4, Township 7 South, Range 26 East. This corn, about 2,500 bushels, was completely destroyed by the flood of August 27, 1947.

PH.BTLaney.024: Cotton field in the valley of Mountain Fork River 5 miles south of U.S. highway 70. The picture shows accumulated top-soil lost by erosion due to successive floods over the period of the last 10 years. The farmer is pointing to a point about 2 1/2 feet high on the stump where the topsoil stood 10 years ago.

PH.BTLaney.025: View of the sand deposit in the corn field located in the valley of Mountain Fork River 5 miles south of U.S. highway 70 in Section 11, Township 7 South, Range 26 East. The flood of August 27, 1947 washed away top soil and it receded depositing sand to a maximum depth of 12 inches.

PH.BTLaney.026: Corn field located in the in the valley of Mountain Fork River 6 miles south of Eagletown, Oklahoma at the junction of Mountain Fork River and Little River in Section 10, Township 7 South, Range 26 East, Showing top soil erosion caused by the flood of August 27, 1947.

PH.BTLaney.027: Land belonging to N.N. McCain in the valley of Mountain Fork River approximately 5 1/2 miles south of U.S. highway 70 on line between Sections 10 and 11, Township 7 South, Range 26 East. This view shows mass erosion caused by successive floods. The Flood of August 27, 1947 widened this gully, which is 10 to 12 feet deep, approximately 25 feet into the corn field.

PH.BTLaney.028: View of a section of a split rail wall and water break built by Ezra Brown in an effort to rebuild his farm land in Mountain Fork valley 1/4 of a mile south of Hochatown, Oklahoma, which had already been washed away by floods. Although the wall, which was built on a downstream side of land, had for a period of 10 years accomplished its purpose of retaining top soil; this year's crop of corn, the first in 10 years, was inundated and completely destroyed, August 1947 Flood.

Arkansas State Hospital

PH.BTLaney.029: View of Ben Kincaid's farm located on east side of Mountain Fork River, 1/4 of a mile west of Hochatown, Oklahoma, showing gravel and rocks deposited in corn field by flood of August 1947 over an area of one acre to a maximum depth of 12 inches.

PH.BTLaney.030-031: View of corn field on J.H. Ayers' farm located on the east side of Mountain Fork River 2 miles south of Eagletown, Oklahoma during the flood of August 27, 1947.

Arkansas State Hospital

PH.BTLaney.032: Proposed new building

PH.BTLaney.033-036: Buildings under construction

Photographic Documentation Little Rock Unit, Arkansas State Hospital

PH.BTLaney.037: Female patient standing in hallway filled with beds.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.038: View of deteriorating wall in one of the wards.

PH.BTLaney.039: Print Number 1, Ward D 4 South. Shows a section of the ward housing aged white male patients, victims of diseases of aged, arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) and senility. The ward normally houses 35 patients; it presently houses 72. Beds line the corridors of the ward, day and night.

Legal Status note

Photographic Documentation Little Rock Unit, Arkansas State Hospital

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PH.BTLaney.040: Print Number 2, Ward D 4 South. Window bay designed to be used for reading and indoor recreation. Instead it is lined with beds.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.041: Print Number 3 Ward D 4 South. This photograph is ward room for the feeble patients. It shows about a third of the room with congested arrangement of beds.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.042: Print Number 4. Ward D 1 North. This ward houses African American women patients with varied diseases. It normally accommodates 35 patients; it now houses 77. The photograph is one section of a corridor which is in a constant hubbub.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.043: Print Number 5. Ward D 1 North. This photograph is of a section of a room designed to be used as a dining hall.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.044: Print Number 6. Ward D 1 North. The Tuberculosis "Porch" for African American Women, which is, in fact a room just off the corridor of the ward and illustrates the lack of space and facilities for isolation.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.045: Print Number 7. G Cottage. A woefully dilapidated frame building housing feeble-minded and epileptic children. The photograph shows a section of the dining room.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.046: Print Number 8. G. Cottage. The main sleeping quarters for the patients. 37 are presently housed in the cottage.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.047: Print Number 9. Ward E South. A dilapidated frame building that once served as an Infirmary. It now houses 190 male African American patients with a variety of diseases. It is considered a "fire trap."

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.048: Print Number 10. Ward E South. This photograph is of a section of the dining room and was made to show the patchwork in the ceiling.

PH.BTLaney.049: Print Number 11. Ward D 1 South. This photograph was made at 8 p.m. The patients are aged white males. The ward normally accommodates 35; It now houses 77, half of which sleep on the floor.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.050: Print Number 12. Ward B 2 South. This photograph was made at 8:10 p.m. It shows about half the corridor space of the ward. The patients are mixed white males, mostly aged. The ward normally accommodates 35 patients; it now houses 60.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.051: Print Number 13. Ward E 1 North. This photograph was made at 7:45 p.m. It shows about 40 percent of the corridor floor space. The ward normally accommodates 335 patients; presently it houses 87 patients. The patients are white women of all types.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.052: Print Number 14. F Cottage North. This photograph is of the entrance. The building is frame, body dilapidated inside and outside. It once was a stock barn. It presently houses 157 white women patients; female attendants also reside in the building.

PH.BTLaney.053: Print Number 15. F Cottage North. Another view of the building exterior.

PH.BTLaney.054: Print Number 16. F Cottage North. The dining room. Patients are fed in shifts.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.

PH.BTLaney.055: Print Number 17. F Cottage North. this photograph is of a section of the sleeping quarters which also serves as the "Day Room."

Photographic Documentation Little Rock Unit, Arkansas State Hospital

PH.BTLaney.056: Print No. 18. F Cottage North. This photograph is of the staircase from the ward to the nurses' quarters.

PH.BTLaney.057: Print Number 19. F Cottage North. This photograph is of a typical nurse's room in the attic of the building. It is a corner of a large attic partitioned into several nurses' rooms by the simple expediency of hanging cloth drapes.

PH.BTLaney.058: Print Number 20. Infirmary 1 South. This photograph is of a ward in the infirmary basement. It was improvised to accommodate 30 patients; it presently houses 42. The patients are aged white males. The entire floor space is occupied by beds.

Legal Status note

This material is restricted and will require 48 hour notice for viewing.