

Collection #
SC 2308

**ELIZA BOLTON BROWN
BROWN-BOLTON FAMILY PAPERS, 1842–1882**

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Processed by
Charles Latham
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 2 folders, 40 items

COLLECTION DATES: 1842-1882

PROVENANCE: Robert A. Steward, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2-1-1991

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1991.0233x

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The Brown and Bolton families seem to center in Connersville, Indiana. The center of this collection is Eliza Bolton Brown, who remained in Connersville and heard from her relatives who had moved elsewhere.

Mrs. Brown had two brothers. Jackson P. Bolton bought a lot in Connersville in 1842, but by 1856 he had moved to Peru, where he remained for some years; by 1875 he had moved to Baldwin City, Kansas. Another brother, W. P. Bolton (b. 1803) lived in Cascade, Iowa; his life there was a procession of misfortunes, including a \$500 robbery in 1859, lung sickness, and the loss of his farm. In 1867 he was carrying the U. S. mail, and got his farm back through an unspecified compromise. A nephew, James L. Bolton, was living in Groveland, Putnam County, Indiana, in 1875. There he owned property, was teaching school, and was deciding that it might be wise for him to marry a "big, fat girl" who was poor but industrious and a good housekeeper.

Mrs. Brown had two sons, Evin and Ezra. One son, probably Evin, enrolled in the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in Indianapolis in 1854. In 1871 Ezra Brown married Paulina (Pina) in Peru, Indiana, then left her at home while he staked out a claim in El Paso, Sedgwick County, Kansas, worked as a shoemaker, and subsisted mainly on flour and buffalo meat. When his shop burned during the winter of 1871-1872, Ezra hired out as a buffalo hunter, and earned enough to buy a log cabin which he rolled to his lot. By 1874 he had returned to Indiana and set up as a farmer in LaPorte County, and he and Pina had a new baby. By 1882 Pina seems to have died; Ezra was in Mulvane, Sumner County, Kansas, and his sons Ezra and William were living with his mother in Connersville.

Source: Materials in collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains 36 letters, one deed, and three envelopes, covering the period 1842-1882. It is arranged chronologically. The one deed, dated 1842, transfers a lot in Connersville from Solomon Claypool to Jackson P. Bolton. A letter of 1854 from Thomas McIntire, superintendent of the school for the deaf in Indianapolis, reports on a Brown son who has just enrolled at the school.

Most of the letters are addressed to Eliza Brown at Connersville. One series, dating 1856-1875, comes from her brother Jackson P. Bolton. In one of 1856, he opines that the nation is on the "eve of a Desperate and bloody Civil war" which can be prevented only by "Freemont's" election, and says that if necessary "I will go to Kansas and help the Free State men to make it free." Mrs. Brown's other brother, W. P. Bolton of Cascade, Kansas, in addition to reporting a series of calamities, tells her in 1867 that he "would like to know about Perry Heer killing a man" in Connersville.

Perhaps the most interesting, as well as the best written, series of letters comes from Eliza's son Ezra, in 1871-1872. After thinking about getting a job at the deaf school in Indianapolis, and then getting married in Peru, he takes off for the west. When his cobbler's shop in El Paso is burned, he hires out as a guide for a group of buffalo hunters. They nearly freeze to death, and one of them gets lost while tracking a herd. Ezra tracks down and saves the lost hunter, and his experience with sign language helps him to communicate with some Indians. Other Indians are hostile. The hunters nearly drown in two icy rivers on their way back to civilization. Ezra later returns to Indiana and then to Kansas; he

loses his wife in the meantime, and we leave him agonizing over how to care for his two motherless boys.

Taken as a whole, the collection gives a picture, vivid at times, of one Indiana family's moves, successes, and failures in the mid-nineteenth century.

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2308).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.