

“A Confidential Talk to the Gentry Family”
by the historian, Thomas Benton Gentry

Some Gentry's came to Missouri from Kentucky in 1816 after Richard Gentry had served in the War of 1812. They passed on to the Boone's Lick country in 1820, where the head of the family participated in laying out the town of Columbia, the county seat of Boone.

These Gentry's were of Kentucky fighting stock. They had no fear of man or beast, the British redcoats or the savage Indian. The Gentrys have been in every war fought on American soil. The family records indicate that there were eighteen members of the Gentry family who took part in the Revolutionary War, seventeen in the War of 1812, four in the Seminole War in Florida, two in the Texas War, five in the Mexican War, and in the Civil War there were nineteen in the Federal Army and forty-one in the Confederate Army, and in the other wars the records were equally creditable.

Nicholas H. Gentry was on the Confederate side and fell at Wilson's Creek. Captain Henry Clay Gentry was on the Federal side and captured General Jeff Thompson, the Swamp Fox of Southeast Missouri fame. A President of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad was Joshua Gentry. There have been Gentrys in the pulpits of Baptist, Christian and other churches. The Gentry's have made good soldiers, good preachers and teachers, good lawyers, good legislators, good surgeons, good county court judges, good civil engineers, good justices of the peace, good city councilmen, good road overseers, good jurors and good citizens generally.

Then he cautioned the Gentrys not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but soberly. He reminded his relatives that we have never yet furnished this country a president, a cabinet officer, a United States Senator, a Governor, or a Federal Judge. Then he lectured briefly and excellently on eugenics:

“The secret is, my dear relatives, we have not paid enough attention to education, and to keeping up and improving our stock. Our young women are often too thoughtless in the matter of selecting partners for life. And our men when not engaged in War have been busy with their farms, their stock raising, their fine horses, cattle, sheep and hogs and money making, and have too much neglected education and cultivation of the intellect. I most earnestly call your attention to these matters, and as a brother urge you henceforth to be exceedingly careful and wise in the contracting of matrimonial alliances. Choose none but the very best stock, and then with the proper education and training, you may expect to raise statesmen, orators, great preachers, lawyers, inventors, men of genius, as well as the well balanced solid farmer and man of business. The early training of your children is a most important matter. You cannot be too

careful to teach and train them with the highest standards of morality and religion.”

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Thomas Benton Gentry was born October 13, 1830 in Columbia, MO; the son of General Richard Gentry Jr. and Nancy Ann Hawkins. (Son of Richard Sr., David, Nicholas II, Nicholas I Gentry). He married Mary Elizabeth Todd, daughter of Roger North Todd of Kentucky; she died on September 15, 1892 and on September 21, 1903 he married Eugenia P. Babb. Thomas Benton Gentry was named for Senator Thomas H. Benton, a famous United States Senator from MO and a close personal friend of his father, General “Dick” Gentry. Thomas Benton Gentry died on February 24, 1906 in Kansas City and is buried in Columbia, MO.