

# **BLACKFORD, WILLIAM MATTHEWS, 1801-1864.**

## **William Matthews Blackford papers, 1841-1862**

Emory University  
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### **Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Blackford, William Matthews, 1801-1864.  
**Title:** William Matthews Blackford papers, 1841-1862  
**Call Number:** Manuscript Collection No. 48  
**Extent:** .5 linear ft. (1 box)  
**Abstract:** Copies of letters written by William Matthews Blackford, United States charge d'affaires at Bogota, New Grenada (now Colombia) from 1842-1844, and extracts from his diary for October 18, 1859-September 14, 1862.  
**Language:** Materials entirely in English.

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### **Administrative Information**

#### **Restrictions on access**

Unrestricted access.

#### **Terms Governing Use and Reproduction**

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

#### **Related Materials in Other Repositories**

Blackford family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and Blackford family papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

#### **Related Materials in This Repository**

Launcelot Minor Blackford papers.

#### **Source**

Gift, 1970 with subsequent additions.

#### **Citation**

[after identification of item(s)], William Matthews Blackford papers, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

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**Processing**

Processed by SG, June 1970.

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**Collection Description****Biographical Note**

William Matthews Blackford (August 19, 1801-April 14, 1864), banker and journalist, served as United States charge d'affaires at Bogota, New Grenada (now Colombia), 1842-1844, and raised five sons who fought in the Confederate Army. He had been born the son of Benjamin and Isabella (Arthur) Blackford at Catoctin Furnace, Frederick County, Maryland where Benjamin operated a foundry. William Matthews studied law and in 1825 moved to Fredericksburg to practice. That same year, on October 12, he married Mary Berkeley Minor (December 2, 1802-September 15, 1896), daughter of John Minor of Fredericksburg and an active participant in the colonization movement. In October 1828, the young lawyer purchased and began editing the *Political Arena*, a Whig newspaper in Fredericksburg and gradually discontinued the practice of law. When his friend, President John Tyler, in 1842, appointed him to the diplomatic post in New Grenada, Blackford sold the paper. His family now included seven children - Lucy Landon, Charles Minor, Eugene, Benjamin Lewis, Mary Isabella, William Willis and Launcelot Minor but only "Willey" accompanied him to South America. Blackford returned to the U. S. in 1845 and the following year the family moved to Lynchburg where he edited the *Lynchburg Virginian*, another whig organ. He sold his interest in this paper in 1850 to become the Lynchburg postmaster. The Democratic victory in the election of 1852 left him jobless again but his effective work in securing for Lynchburg a branch of the Exchange Bank of Richmond resulted in his appointment as Cashier of the new bank, a position he held for the remainder of his life. During the Civil War he served as financial agent at Lynchburg for the Confederate government. An Episcopalian, he regularly attended St. Paul's Church in Lynchburg and took an active part in church affairs. For additional information about William Matthews Blackford and his family see the following book: *L. Minor Blackford, Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory the Story of a Virginia Lady, Mary Berkeley Minor Blackford, 1802-1896, Who Taught Her Sons to Hate Slave and to Love the Union* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954).

**Scope and Content Note**

This collection consists typescript copies of seventy-seven letters and two poems, most of which were written by William Matthews Blackford while in Bogota, New Grenada, 1842-1844, and of extracts from his diary for October 18, 1859-September 14, 1862. The letters include fifty from the charge to his wife, Mary Berkeley (Minor) Blackford, six to various of his children, three to his wife's cousin Lucian Minor and fourteen from Willey to his mother, brother and older sister.

The letters, especially those from Blackford to his wife, are lengthy and well written. He describes in detail scenes and experiences of the trip to Bogota via St. Thomas, Laquira (La Guayra), Caracas, Curacoa, Marocaibo, and the river Lulia (Zulia) and of life in the Colombian capitol. Frequently, he tells of Catholic rituals and festivals, of local customs, and state occasion. He comments on political events at home, emancipation of slaves, Tractarianism, and the education of his children. He refers to his diplomatic efforts and predicts the building of a canal across the Isthmus of Panama within twenty years (December 17-22, 1843). Willey writes of

his studies, animals, things he has done and seen and other topics typical of a boy of eleven to thirteen years.

In his diary Blackford recorded and commented upon contemporary events from John Brown's Raid to the Second Battle of Manassas. He describes the organization of the "Home Guards" in Lynchburg, discusses public sentiment, reacts to secession, Fort Sumter, and Lincoln's inaugural address. He tells of troops coming into Virginia, of his trip to the battlefield after the first Battle of Manassas, of hospitals and the sick and wounded, of visitors and news from the front and the camps.

All of the materials are typescript copies, frequently carbons of the typescript. Blackford's letters, in one bound volume were copied and later typed by the Florida Historical Records Survey, in 1939, from originals owned by Rev. Randolph F. Blackford. Circumstances prevented the typescripts being checked against the originals. The copies of ten of William W. Blackford's letters were apparently made on another occasion and later inserted into the bound volume. These have been removed and are now in a folder. L. Minor Blackford, grandson of William M. Blackford, in March 1954, made the "almost entirely un-proofread copy" of the extracts from the original diaries and gave this copy to Ralph McGill.

**Arrangement Note**

Arranged in chronological order.

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## Container List

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
1	1	Family correspondence, and miscellany, 1836-1846
1	2	Diary extracts, 1859-1862

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