

MCBLAIR, VIRGINIA MYERS.

Virginia Myers McBlair papers, 1818-1894

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: McBlair, Virginia Myers.
Title: Virginia Myers McBlair papers, 1818-1894
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 74
Extent: .5 linear ft. (1 box)
Abstract: Papers of Virginia Myers McBlair and her husband William McBlair who served in the Confederate States of America Navy during the Civil War. The collection also contains letters to Virginia from her parents, Samuel Myers and Louisa Marx Myers of Norfolk, Virginia.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

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

[Myers family papers](#), American Jewish Archives and the Virginia Historical Society.

Source

Gift, 1971.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Virginia Myers McBlair papers, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by SG, 1971.

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Collection Description

Biographical Note

Virginia (Myers) McBlair was born in Pensacola, Florida, about 1821-1823 and died sometime after 1891, probably in Virginia. Her father Samuel Myers (February 24, 1790-February 21, 1829), a merchant from Norfolk, Virginia, had ridden through the Creek Indian Territory in 1821 to reach Pensacola, arriving before the Spanish had departed. His wife Louisa (Marx) Myers (January 28, 1795-January 16, 1849) joined him there sometime prior to the summer of 1822; but the family remained only a short while, and Samuel Myers was job hunting in Washington by December 1823. After Samuel's death, his wife and three children Virginia Myers, Moses Myers, and Joseph M. Myers apparently lived with Louisa's father Joseph Marx in Richmond. The Myers and Marx families were Jewish, but Virginia seems to have been a Christian.

In the spring of 1843, Virginia Myers married William McBlair of Maryland, an officer in the United States Navy. McBlair had entered the navy on November 16, 1824, and eventually rose to the rank of Commander. He received an appointment as Commander in the Navy of Virginia in April 1861, and with that Navy was transferred to the Confederate service the following June. According to the U. S. Office of Naval Records and Navy Department Library's *Register of Officers of the Confederate States Navy, 1861 - 1865* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1931), he served on the *C.S.R.S. United States* in 1861 and was in command at Craney Island, Virginia, 1861-1862. In August 1861, having left Craney Island, he was placed in charge of four batteries on the James River between Jamestown Island and Day's Neck near Smithfield. In May of 1862 he was ordered to Richmond to serve on a Court of Inquiry "upon the burning of the Ponchartrain fleet." He moved to Savannah in August and thence to Mobile, and by mid-October, 1862, he had been returned to Savannah. According to the *Register* he served on the *C.S.S. Patrick Henry* in 1862 and commanded the *C.S.S. Atlanta*, 1862-63. While in this last position, he died on February 16, 1863. Virginia, who had followed her husband south, apparently returned to Richmond after his death.

William and Virginia had at least five children, one of whom died in infancy. The others were William McBlair, Jr., George McBlair, Markie McBlair (Marx?), and a daughter born after Commander McBlair's death. The couple seems also to have raised Minnie McBlair, daughter of Parker or Parkins McBlair (William's brother?). The oldest son, William McBlair, Jr., (born in July 1848?) began serving as his father's aide in the spring of 1862 and officially entered the Confederate Navy on July 25, 1862, as Acting Master's Mate. The *Register* indicates that he served on the *C.S.S. Georgia*, Savannah Squadron, 1862, and was on the *C.S.S. Atlanta* when it was captured on June 17, 1863, by the *U.S.S. Weehawken*. He was paroled at Fort Warren on September 28, 1864, exchanged on October 18, 1864, and served on the *C.S.S. Richmond*, James River Squadron, in 1865. During the post-war years the family scattered. Willie was working in St. Louis in 1873, George went to Texas but eventually returned to Norfolk, and in 1890 Markie was in San Francisco.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of the papers of Virginia Myers and William McBlair from 1818-1894, with the majority concentrated between 1818 and 1863. The papers contain approximately 235 letters and notes, most of which were written to Virginia Myers McBlair, and a small quantity of other family papers. Forty-four of the letters were written by Samuel Myers to his wife Louisa

between April 20, 1818, and January 4, 1824, and deal primarily with personal and business affairs. His letters from Montgomery County, Alabama, May 20, [1821?] and Pensacola, May 29, 1821, are unusually descriptive of the Indians and events of the trip and of Pensacola just prior to the Spanish departure. There is one letter from Louisa to her father Joseph Marx, September 15, 1822, in which she describes their living conditions in Pensacola, the yellow fever threat, and the difficulty of getting staple food supplies. From his letters, Myers appears to be a person who read considerably and had entree to diplomatic and government circles. There are 63 letters written by Louisa to her daughter Virginia between November 1833 and August 1848. Personal and domestic affairs and the activities of family and friends constitute the chief topics of these chatty letters. There are occasional references to some aspect of Jewish-Christian relations, and on July 8, 1843, Louisa comments on the influenza "raging principally among the Colored Population" Joseph M. Myers, in a letter to his sister on November 14, 1837, written from Camp Forlorn Hope near Pensacola, speaks of the international character of that city. A letter from W. V. Mayo, aboard the *U.S.S. Dale*, November 11, 1857, tells of looking for American slave ships along the African coast.

Of the 48 letters from William McBlair to his wife, all but three were written between April 26, 1861, and December 27, 1862. William writes in some detail about his activities, of the fortifications and operations of Craney Island and the James River Batteries, of ship movements and the blockade, of the prospects of peace and the attitudes of himself and others, of living conditions, and of the ironclad ship *Atlanta*. Throughout, he is concerned for her safety and comfort as she moves from place to place to be near him. He writes concerning the education of his children and his efforts to secure for Willie an appointment as a midshipman. An unsigned letter written to Virginia from Savannah, June 21, 1863, tells of the capture of the *Atlanta* and of the opinions of some of the older naval officers regarding the ship. The post-war letters are primarily concerned with the children's education and employment. In 1873 Willie wrote from St. Louis of the poor prospects there for a young man, and Markie, in San Francisco in 1890, tells of his difficulties finding employment.

Among the other papers are a folder of class compositions written by Virginia in 1837, the funeral sermon of Samuel Marx (Louisa's brother) and a copy of his will, and a tribute to Joseph Marx and an extract from his will. There is also a copy of the Navy Register for 1828.

Arrangement Note

Arranged by record type.

Container List

Correspondence

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	1818-1824
1	2	1818-1824, undated
1	3	1833-1842
1	4	1830-1842, undated
1	5	1833-1845
1	6	1847-1849
1	7	1851-1857
1	8	1858-1860, undated
1	9	1861 April- July 1861
1	10	1861 August- August 1862
1	11	1862 September- December 1862
1	12	1863-1866
1	13	1871-1894
1	14	undated

Miscellaneous

1	15	Schoolgirl compositions
1	16	Miscellaneous papers
1	17	Navy register, 1828-[1831]
