

WILLIAM GILES HARDING PAPERS

1827 - 1872

Biography/History

William Giles Harding [1808-1886] was born near Nashville and attended the University of Nashville; the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy in Middletown, Connecticut; and, studied law in Litchfield, Connecticut.

William Giles Harding married Elizabeth Irwin McGavock in 1840 after the death of his first wife. He lived first at Stone's River Farm, where his son John later lived, and then at the 3500-acre Belle Meade Plantation, where he raised cashmere goats and racehorses. He transformed the Federal style house his father built into the Greek Revival mansion that stands today.

At the beginning of the American Civil War he served as a General in the Tennessee militia. In 1862 he was imprisoned for six months by federal troops as a political prisoner, for supporting the Confederate rebellion, and sent to Detroit and Fort Mackinaw, Michigan. During his absence, his wife was left to manage Belle Meade Plantation. During the war, his plantation was used as a headquarters for the Union Army.

After the war, Belle Meade became one of the best thoroughbred breeding farms in the country.

Mrs. M. G. Buckner donated the original letters to Special Collections. Ridley Wills deposited some typed transcripts of the letters with genealogical footnotes in 1985.

Scope and Contents

This .42 linear feet collection is divided into three series:

Series I includes original, handwritten general correspondence sent to William Giles Harding primarily from Matthew Fontaine Maury, 1827-1872. The letters discuss Agricultural and Meterological Societies, importation of Llamas and Alpacas from South America to Tennessee, the Civil War, and politics. It also includes an address by Matthew Fontaine Maury before the National Agricultural Association, miscellaneous notes, and typed transcripts to selected letters. The series is arranged chronologically containing 28 file folders.

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Series II includes original handwritten family correspondence from William Giles Harding's wife Elizabeth I. McGavock Harding; daughter, Selene; daughter-in-law, Maggie; servant, Susanna; sister-in-law, Mary McGavock Southall; nephew, Randal McGavock Southall; and, friends beginning in 1860 and continuing while he was in prison during the American Civil War and ending in 1867. The letters chronicle family life in Nashville during the Union occupation. There are typed transcripts for selected letters, and some typed transcripts with footnotes. The series is arranged chronologically in 22 file folders, and includes two bound volumes of the same letters.

Series III contains two photographs, in two file folders.

Series I - General – 28 file folders

Correspondence – Incoming

February 6, 1827	from Sam Houston
October 7, 1827	from G. E. Candway
November 20, 1859	from Matthew Fontaine Maury
November 25, 1859	to George G. Hobson from Matthew Fontaine Maury
November 29, 1859	to Matthew Fontaine Maury from George G. Hobson
November 30, 1859	to George G. Hobson from Matthew Fontaine Maury
December 19, 1859	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
December 19, 1859	to John R. Clay from Matthew Fontaine Maury
January 11, 1860	to Matthew Fontaine Maury from George G. Hobson
January 13, 1860	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
May 7, 1860	to Matthew Fontaine Maury from George G. Hobson
May 8, 1860	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
July 12, 1860	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
July 30, 1860	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
September 14, 1860	to Matthew Fontaine Maury from J. Randolph Clay
September 27, 1860	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury

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October 24, 1860	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
December 20, 1860	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
July 3, 1861	to 'my dear sir' from Matthew Fontaine Maury
October 9, 1861	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
November 24, 1861	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
December 11, 1861	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
January 4, 1862	to 'my dear uncle' from D. H. Maury
January 5, 1862	to Harding from Matthew Fontaine Maury
March 26, 1872	to W. H. Jackson from Matthew Fontaine Maury With newspaper clipping
April 17, 1872	to W. H. Jackson from Matthew Fontaine Maury
April 29, 1872	to W. H. Jackson from Matthew Fontaine Maury
September 15,	to W. H. Jackson from Matthew Fontaine Maury

Address

May 27, 1872	Matthew Fontaine Maury before the National Agricultural Association, St. Louis, Missouri
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Miscellaneous Notes

Transcripts – from Incoming Correspondence [selected]

February 6, 1827

October 7, 1827

December 19, 1859

December 20, 1860

December 11, 1861

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January 4, 1862

March 26, 1872

April 17, 1872

April 29, 1872

Series II – Family Letters – 22 file folders

Correspondence – Outgoing

September 24, 1862 to his wife, Elizabeth

July 5, 1867 to daughter from mother

Correspondence – Incoming

March 30, 1860 from wife, Elizabeth

April 27, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

May 2, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

May 6, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

May 8, 1862 from daughter, Selene, and from wife

May 11, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

May 15, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

May 18, 1862 from William Hague and his wife, Elizabeth

May 21, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

May 23, 1862 from nephew, Randal M. Southall

May 25, 1862 from daughter, Selene, and from wife, Elizabeth

May 26, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

May 31, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

June 3, 1862 from daughter, Selene

June 8, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

June 16, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

June 20, 1862 from sister-in-law, Mary M. Southall

June 24, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

June 29, 1862 from wife, Elizabeth

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July 4, 1862	from wife, Elizabeth
July 10-12, 1862	from daughter, Selene, and from wife, Elizabeth
July 13, 1862	from wife, Elizabeth
July 13, 1862	from nephew, Randal M. Southall
July 17, 1862	from wife, Elizabeth
July 22-27, 1862	from daughter-in-law, Maggie
July 24, 1862	from wife, Elizabeth
July 27, 1862	from wife, Elizabeth
July 30, 1862	from sister-in-law, Mary M. Southall
August 4, 1862	from nephew, Randal M. Southall
August 5, 1862	from wife, Elizabeth
August 14, 1862	from sister-in-law, Mary M. Southall
August 17, 1862	from Randal M. Ewing
August 25, 1862	from servant, Susanna (dictated to Randal M. Ewing)
August 28, 1862	from Randal M. Ewing
August 29, 1862	from wife, Elizabeth
April 15, (18?)	from W. E. Milton

Transcripts – from Incoming Correspondence [selected]

April 27, 1862

May 2, 1862

May 6, 1862

May 11, 1862

May 15, 1862

May 18, 1862 – 2 letters

May 21, 1862

May 23, 1862

May 25, 1862

May 26, 1862

May 31, 1862

June 3, 1862 – 2 letters

June 8, 1862

June 16, 1862

June 20, 1862

June 24, 1862

June 29, 1862

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July 4, 1862
July 12, 1862
July 13, 1862 - 2 letters
July 17, 1862
July 22, 1862
July 24, 1862
July 27, 1862
July 30, 1862

August 5, 1862
August 14, 1862
August 17, 1862
August 25, 1862
August 28, 1862
August 29, 1862

September 24, 1862

March 9, 18 – no original letter

Transcripts – with footnotes [selected]

April 27, 1862

May 2, 1862
May 8, 1862
May 11, 1862
May 15, 1862
May 18, 1862 – 3 letters
May 21, 1862
May 23, 1862
May 25, 1862
May 26, 1862
May 31, 1862

June 3, 1862
June 8, 1862
June 16, 1862
June 20, 1862
June 24, 1862
June 29, 1862

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July 4, 1862
July 12, 1862
July 13, 1862
July 17, 1862
July 22, 1862
July 24, 1862
July 27, 1864
July 30, 1862

August 4, 1862
August 5, 1862
August 14, 1862
August 17, 1862
August 25, 1862

September 24, 1862

Transcripts – from Incoming Correspondence

April 27, 1862 to September 24, 1862
2 bound volumes compiled by Alfred Leland Crabb in 1940

Series III – 2 file folders

Photographs

Carter, Susanna McGavock ‘Mammy’ (1)
Unidentified (1)

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Size: .42 linear feet

Special Collections and University Archives

Jean and Alexander Heard Library

Vanderbilt University

Nashville, Tennessee