

# Wood, John Taylor Correspondence

John Taylor Wood Correspondence

1865



## Title Statement

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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

Ms.2017.016

### Unit Date

1865

### Language

English .

### Abstract

The John Taylor Wood Correspondence consists of ten letters written by John Taylor Wood between April and July of 1865. Nine of the letters were written to his wife, Lola, who was living in and around Richmond at the time; the tenth item is a small note requesting that enclosed letters be forwarded to Lola. Wood was the nephew and military aide to Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

### Creator

Wood, John Taylor, 1830-1904

### Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 folder

### Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

## Administrative Information

## Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

## Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from John Taylor Wood Correspondence must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

## Acquisition Information

The John Taylor Wood Correspondence was purchased by Special Collections in April 2016.

## Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the John Taylor Wood Correspondence was completed in June 2017.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: John Taylor Wood Correspondence, Ms2017-016, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

# Biographical Note

John Taylor Wood (1830-1904) was born at Fort Snelling, Northwest Territory (modern day Minnesota, near St. Paul), on August 13, 1830. His father, Robert Crooke Wood, was an army surgeon. His mother, Anna Mackall Taylor Wood, was the daughter of Zachary Taylor (who would later become the 12th President of the United States). John Taylor Wood was the oldest of their children. His mother's sister, Sara Knox Taylor (1814-1835), was Jefferson Davis' first wife. Wood would later serve as the military aide to his uncle during the Civil War.

Wood was raised in parts of the Midwest and in 1847, joined the U. S. Navy as a midshipman, serving around South America and Mexico during the Mexican War. He graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy in 1852 and continued to serve in the military, receiving several promotions. In 1855, he met Lola MacKubin (1835-1909) and they married in November 1856.

Just prior to the Civil War, Wood taught at the Naval Academy, but he resigned in April 1861. In October 1861, he was commissioned in the Confederate Navy. By 1865, he was promoted to the rank of captain and in the last few months of the war, he accompanied his uncle in his flight south. Wood was taking prison with Davis and others in Georgia in early May 1865, but was able to escape (likely by bribing his captors), making his way to Havana, Cuba, and from there to Halifax, Nova Scotia. In July of 1865, Lola and their two children met him there.

In Canada, Wood established himself as a merchant and business man, in partnership with a former blockade runner, John Wilkenson. Wood and his wife lived the rest of their lives in Canada, dying in 1904. Lola died in 1909 and they are buried together in the Camp Hill Cemetery in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

John and Lola had their first child, a daughter Anne, in 1857. She died in 1859. They would go on to have eight more children. Zachary Taylor Wood (1860-1915) was born when his parents were in Annapolis, Maryland. He grew up in Canada and served in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police from 1885 until his death in 1915 in Asheville, NC. In 1998, "Mount Wood" in the Yukon was renamed by tin his honor. Lola Wood (1864-1956) was born when her mother was likely in the Richmond, Virginia, area. As far as records indicate, she grew up in Canada, and was still living with her parents in 1901. She died in Maryland in 1956 and was buried with her younger sister, Nina. Eleanor M. Wood (later Campbell) was born about 1869. She died in Canada in 1953. John Taylor Wood was born about 1871, but little other information about him was available. George M. Wood was born about 1872/1873. He was a prospector in Canada for many years, and he died in Victoria, Canada, in 1927. Nina Wood was born about 1874. She, like Lola, was still living with her parents in 1901 and appears to have never married. She died in Maryland in 1955. Mary Wood was born about 1876. Little information about her was found. Charles Carroll Wood was born about 1878. In 1896, he graduated from the Royal Military College of Canada and served in the Boer War, where he was killed in 1899.

# Scope and Content

The John Taylor Wood Correspondence consists of ten letters written by John Taylor Wood between April and July of 1865. Nine of the letters were written to his wife, Lola, who was living in and around Richmond at the time; the tenth item is a small note requesting that enclosed letters be forwarded to Lola. Wood was the nephew and military aide to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. His letters chronicle his flight with Davis from Richmond to points further south and later, his establishing a home in Halifax. Wood was captured with Davis and others in May of 1865, but was able to bribe a captor and flee to Cuba. He made his way from Havana to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, in June, where Lola and their two children eventually met him.

The majority of Wood's date to April of 1865 and include news of himself, his uncle, and the officers around them. He shared opinions on his fellow officers and Confederates, whose loyalty begins to wane before his, as he wrote on April 24th from Charlotte, North Carolina:

If I have understood correctly the terms of the negotiation now pending it is a eventual surrender of what we have been contending for during the past four years, our independence: I care not what side issues may be granted. or what else they may concede, with out freedom it amounts to nothing. If I know myself, I never will consent to these terms & Uncle never will, but we are almost alone. Cabinet ministers, generals, soldiers, citizens & indeed 99 out of a hundred are in favor of these.

He tells Lola of their travels further south and write extensively about their children, how she should read his letters to them (in particular their eldest, Zachary Taylor Wood), and how much he misses them. He also keeps her updated on the whereabouts of family and friends, when he knows it. Shortly after the last letter written in April, Wood was captured with Davis in Georgia. As the story goes, with his uncle's permission, he bribed a Union officer to escape, and was able to flee to Cuba. In a small note, dated June 1865, he wrote to a friend, Jim (referenced later), asking him to forward an enclosed letter to Lola.

The last two letters were written in mid-July from Montreal. Both talk about his own travels through Canada from Halifax to Montreal (though they would eventually settle in Halifax). He also writes on rumors of his own escape:

I hope my name will not appear again at present in the papers, I am sorry to see it & will avoid it if possible, I am almost tempted to assume some other name, but will not do it, I have done nothing yet to be ashamed of. However I am told there is an account of my escaping from a Yankee Cruiser in some of the papers, where I am represented as having shown false or bogus papers and thus avoided capture, I have not seen it, but it is not necessary to tell you dear that it is not true.

Part of the penultimate letter surrounds logistics and plans for her travels to meet him and both of the final letters contain much of his concerns for her welfare and that of the children.

Transcripts of the letters are included with the collection.

## Keywords

Civil War

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

Wood, Lola MacKubin, 1835-1909

Davis, Jefferson, 1808-1889

## Description of Subordinate Components

### Letters

**Unit Date** 1865-04-06-1865-07-13

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