

A Guide to the Wilson Family Papers, 1790-1944

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A Collection in the Virginia Historical Society Mss1 W6997 a FA2

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

Mss1 W6997 a FA2

Language

English

Abstract

Chiefly papers of Rev. Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson of Gerrardstown and Hedgesville, Berkeley County, W. Va., including correspondence, 1831-1873, loose accounts, 1833-1872, Presbyterian church materials for Berkeley County and for Shenandoah County, Va., and post office records, 1836-1845, for Woodstock, Va. Also present are the papers of Mary Elizabeth (Chamberlin) Wilson of Gerrardstown and of Kabletown, Jefferson County, W. Va., including correspondence, 1844-1894, and scrapbooks; papers of Hall Wilson of Gerrardstown and Kabletown, including correspondence, 1867-1910, loose accounts, 1859-1915, and other materials; and papers of Charles Lee Wilson of Kabletown, San Francisco, Calif., and Astoria, Ore., including correspondence, 1870-1889, describing his life and work in California and Oregon and his travels in the Washington Territory, 1885-1888, accounts, 1875-1889, Hampden-Sydney College materials, 1871-1874, and general miscellany. Also present in the collection are the diary, 1827-1828, of William McPherson (1748?-1831) and correspondence, 1836-1875, of Jane MacPherson (d. 1877) of Charles Town, W. Va., and Baltimore, Md., including many letters from family members in the North and Midwest giving a Union perspective on the Civil War.

Physical Characteristics

3,050 items.

Repository

Virginia Historical Society

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Gift/purchase of Dr. Thornton Tayloe Perry, Washington, D.C., and Mrs. Barclay K. Read, McLean, Va., in 1984. Formerly a part of the collections of Thornton Tayloe Perry II of Charles Town, W. Va.

Preferred Citation

Wilson Family Papers, 1790-1944 (Mss1 W6997 a FA2), Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.

Biographical/Historical Information

Wilson and related McPherson and Chamberlin families of Jefferson and Berkeley counties, W. Va. The McPhersons and Chamberlins were prominent in the Quaker community. Individuals represented in the collection include Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson (1804-1873), Presbyterian minister of Gerrardstown and Hedgesville, Berkeley County; Wilson's third wife, Mary Elizabeth (Chamberlin) Wilson (1815-1895) of Gerrardstown; and Hall Wilson (1847-1916) of Gerrardstown and Kabletown, Jefferson County, farmer and active member of the Democratic Party.

Scope and Content Information

This collection opens with a few items each of several early members of two prominent Quaker families in what is now Jefferson County, W. Va. William McPherson (1748?-1831) kept a diary, 1827-1828, which contains cryptic notes on weather and family members. An 1825 letter from his son Jonas (b. 1773) discusses the latter's mercantile activities in Baltimore, Md. The papers of McPherson's contemporary, Jonas Chamberlain (d. 1794), include accounts, a list of land warrants, and estate materials, all primarily from the 1790s. Also included are accounts of his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Chamberlin.

Chamberlin's son Elijah (d. 1818) married his first cousin Mary McPherson (1780?-1860), daughter of William McPherson and Jane Chamberlin. Elijah Chamberlin lived in Charles Town, Jefferson County. Among letters written to him, 1798-1817, is one interesting missive from William Cranch and William Thornton concerning sheep breeding. His financial records include accounts with Ferdinando Fairfax (1797, 1809). Chamberlin and John McPherson served as administrators of the estate of James Proctor (d. 1806) of Muse's Mill in Jefferson County. Their materials, 1804-1811, concerning the estate include letters to Proctor, loose accounts, (including accounts with Dr. John Dalrymple Orr and William Byrd Page) and receipts for wheat.

Elijah Chamberlin's papers likewise include receipts from Alexandria merchants for the sale of flour, a commonplace book, 1790-1792, including accounts, and an order for lumber on the account of Ferdinando Fairfax, 1817. Daniel McPherson (b. 1775) served as his cousin's administrator. Estate materials include items concerning the guardianship of Chamberlin's children by his widow and litigation in courts in Jefferson

and Loudoun counties.

Mary (McPherson) Chamberlin's records consist of accounts, 1819-1867 (especially receipts for tax payments in Jefferson County and Winchester, Va.), bonds, 1833-1837, and miscellany. Her estate materials include wills, 1849-1859, written in Berkeley County, Va. (now W. Va.), a note of lawyer John Hazlehurst Boneval Latrobe, receipts and an obituary notice.

Mary (McPherson) Chamberlin's records consist of accounts, 1819-1867 (especially receipts for tax payments in Jefferson County and Winchester, Va.), bonds, 1833-1837, and miscellany. Her estate materials include wills, 1849-1859, written in Berkeley County, Va. (now W. Va.), a note of lawyer John Hazlehurst Boneval Latrobe, receipts and an obituary notice.

Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson (1804-1873), founder of this particular Wilson line in West Virginia, attended Princeton Theological Seminary and was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1832. He was accepted into the Winchester Presbytery in that year and served as pastor at Woodstock and Strasburg churches in Shenandoah County until 1835. The latter year he moved to Berkeley County, where he remained the rest of his life as pastor of Presbyterian congregations at Falling Waters, Gerrardstown and Tuscarora.

Wilson maintained correspondence, 1831-1873 (Box 3), primarily with fellow ministers in the Winchester Presbytery and as chairman of the Presbytery's Committee on Education, and with ministerial students at Jefferson College, Cannonsburg, Pa. (now Washington & Jefferson College, Washington, Pa.) and at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Among the more frequent or prominent of these correspondents are ministers John Mayo Pleasants Atkinson, William Henry Foote (including minutes of the Presbytery concerning Wilson), James Robert Graham (of Winchester), John Lodor (of Montvue Collegiate Institute, Frederick County, Va.) and Samuel B. Wilson (of Fredericksburg, Va.). Ministerial students include Jacob Doll, Stewart Robinson and William W. Stickley. There are also a number of letters from sisters of Wilson's first wife, Emeline (Forman) Wilson (1811-1837) of Freehold, N.J.

Wilson's financial records, 1833-1872, include loose accounts of his second wife, Harriet Ann (Tabb) Wilson (1838-1839). Presbyterian Church materials concern Wilson's pastorates in Shenandoah and Berkeley counties (Box 5), as well as his work in the Winchester Presbytery. The Berkeley county materials consist of resolutions and reports; accounts; certificates of church membership; lists of subscribers to church buildings and a fund to defend "Old School" Presbyterians in a lawsuit in 1837; records, 1869-1871, of the education of Charles Scott Lingamfelter as a Presbyterian minister; and sermons preached by Wilson and William Thomas Leavell in Charles Town, 1858-1860. Wilson also retained marriage licences, 1833-1853, issued by court clerks in Berkeley, Jefferson, Morgan and Shenandoah counties, certificates issued for Negro slave marriages, and reports of marriages performed, 1847-1859.

The records of Wilson's work on the Education Committee of the Winchester Presbytery are comprised of letters written to William Caldwell Matthews as chairman, 1834-1835 (including letters of Layton Y. Atkins [an elder in Fredericksburg], Jacob Doll, John Lodor and Stewart Robinson); accounts, 1832-1860, mostly for educational expenses of ministerial students Jacob Doll, James J. Gardner, William C. Sheetz and Frederick Nicholas Whaley (including receipts from educators John Lodor and Samuel M. Whann); committee reports; and letters, 1833-1834, of John Lodor and Stewart Robinson to James Moore Brown of Martinsburg, Berkeley County, Va. (now W. Va.).

Miscellaneous Presbytery materials include an affidavit and deed of William Henry Foote; official communications, 1838-1869 (including a Charles Town broadside); letters, 1832-1852; records of Wilson as moderator of the stated meeting in Front Royal, Va., in 1858; lists of pastors; and general miscellany.

Box 6 contains records, 1836-1845, of the U.S. Post Office at Woodstock in Shenandoah County, kept by the postmaster, James Allen, a member of Wilson's congregation. The records consist of correspondence (including letters signed by Amos Kendall); quarterly accounts with the Post Office Department; receipts of payments to contractors; dead letter accounts; inventories of property and letters; and miscellany. Wilson's personal miscellany consists of bonds, materials concerning the guardianship of two of his sons, and receipts for wheat issued by millers at Spring Mills and Tuscarora Mills in Berkeley County. Lastly, there are some letters addressed to Emeline (Forman) Wilson, 1834-1836, primarily from family members in Freehold, N.J.

Wilson's third wife, Mary Elizabeth (Chamberlin) Wilson (1815-1895), lived in Kabletown, Jefferson County, Gerrardstown and Hedgesville, Berkeley County, W. Va. Her correspondence, 1844-1894 (Boxes 7-12), is largely family-oriented, consisting of many letters from her children and stepchildren, as well as members of the Chamberlin family. Among the correspondents are William M. Chamberlin, James Robert Graham, John Henry Miller (a Lynchburg native who became a prominent attorney in San Francisco, Calif.) and Edwin Lindsley Wilson.

Mrs. Wilson's youngest son, Charles Lee Wilson, attended Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia (1871-1874), taught school in Jefferson County, and then left for California in 1876. He wrote a letter home to his mother nearly every week for the next thirteen years. During that time his lengthy and interesting letters describe his activities as a clerk, stockbroker and customs officer in San Francisco (1876-1878, 1881- 1884; including references to the Vigilance Committee in July 1877); a miner in Darwin, Calif. (1877-1878); a real estate broker in Oakland, Calif. (1878); a teacher at St. Matthers Hall, a military school in San Mateo, Calif. (1878-

1881); a manager for the Alaska Commercial Co. on Ounalaska Island, Alaska Territory (1882); and a bookkeeper for salmon canneries in Astoria, Oregon, and Tacoma, Washington Territory (1885- 1888).

Accounts, 1837-1891; scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and recipes, and general miscellany complete the papers of Mary Elizabeth (Chamberlin) Wilson (Box 12). The following box contains records of the Wilsons' eldest son, teacher Valerius Winchester Wilson (1839-1902), of Guinea Station and Woodford, 1909; accounts, 1854-1887; and a lease, 1873, to a house in Kabletown, W. Va.

Edwin Lindsley Wilson (1845-1915) was a Presbyterian minister in Gerrardstown, W. Va., and later in Waterford, Loudoun County, Va. His correspondence, 1866-1908, is primarily with brothers Hall Wilson and Charles Lee Wilson, while his accounts, 1865-1886, include records of his education at Winchester Classical School and Hampden-Sydney College (both 1866). There are also materials concerning his pastorate at Gerrardstown Presbyterian Church, 1874-1880. The correspondence, 1874-1909, of his wife, Nannie Elizabeth (Dupuy) Wilson (1849-1925), primarily concerns her husband and Charles Lee Wilson.

Born Ashmun Hall Wilson (1847-1916), this Gerrardstown and Kabletown farmer soon dropped his first name. Hall Wilson was active in Democratic party politics in Berkeley County and was also a master of Mill Creek Grange. His correspondence, 1867-1910 (Boxes 14-18), includes a large number of letters from Dr. Coketon, Durbin and Thomas, W. Va.) and Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson Edwin Graham Wilson and Frances Keightley (Timerlake) Wilson (concerning Edwin Lindsley Wilson); and his farm manager in Jefferson County, Benjamin F. Yates.

Hall Wilson's loose accounts cover the period 1859-1915. Agricultural materials consist of agreements, notices, government reports and bulletins, tickets to local fairs, and miscellany. Democratic party materials, 1891-1908, include notices of meetings, campaign materials and broadsides, and a certificate as commissioner of elections in Berkeley County, 1900. Records, 1873-1884, concerning Wilson as public school trustee in Jefferson County and materials, 1893-1899, regarding Gerrardstown Presbyterian Church also appear in the collection. A few items of miscellany (Box 20) conclude Hall Wilson's papers.

Mary Emma (Seibert) Wilson (b. 1850), Hall Wilson's wife, maintained correspondence, 1864-1909, with many members of her family including brothers Fredericks N. Seibert (of Hedgesville, concerning local births, marriages and deaths) and Luther F. Seibert. Charles Scott Lingamfelter wrote a number of letters to her while a student at Hampden-Sydney College, as did her sister-in-law Ophelia Forman (Wilson) Harper. Emma Wilson's student essays and exercises, 1867-1869, have been preserved, along with a few items of miscellany (Box 20).

The youngest Wilson son, Charles Lee Wilson (1856-1889), has been mentioned above. Additional records of his in Box 21 consist of correspondence, 1870-1889, while in Kabletown, W. Va., San Francisco, Calif., and Astoria, Oregon. Among the correspondents are John Henry Miller and G. Edgar Walraven (while a student at Bethel Academy in Fauquier County, Va.). Accounts cover the period 1875-1889; Hampden-Sydney College records, 1871-1874, include reports, certificates and accounts. Letters of recommendation and introduction, 1876-1888, have been preserved, as have a catalog, prospectus and history of St. Matthews Hall, San Mateo, Calif. News clippings, 1884, concern the history of vigilantes in San Francisco, Calif. Notes and an essay prepared by Wilson cover his trip from Martinsburg, W. Va., to Astoria, Oregon, in 1887.

The collection closes (Box 22) with a few items of correspondence of Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson (b. 1873), a fruit grower in Gerrardstown, W. Va., followed by miscellany of a number of other family members who also appear elsewhere in the collection, particularly within the correspondence of major figures discussed above. These family members include George E. Chamberlin, John Chamberlin, Jonas Chamberlin (1805?-1855), William M. Chamberlin, Jane M. (Chamberlin) Hamill, Charles Edwin Harper, Ophelia Forman (Wilson) Harper, Catherine Virginia (Hedges) Seibert, James Hall Wilson, and other members of the Chamberlin, Seibert, and Wilson families.

Index Terms

California -- Description and travel -- 1869-1950.

Chamberlin family.

Gerrardstown (W. Va.) -- History -- 19th century.

Hedgesville (W. Va.) -- History -- 19th century.

Kabletown (W. Va.) -- History.

McPherson family.

McPherson, Jane, d. 1877.

McPherson, William, 1748?-1831.

Oregon -- Description and travel -- 19th century.

Presbyterian Church -- Virginia -- History -- 19th century.

Presbyterian Church -- West Virginia -- History -- 19th century.

Shenandoah County (Va.) -- History -- 19th century.
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Public opinion.
Washington (State) -- Description and travel -- 19th century.
Wilson, Charles Lee, 1856-1889.
Wilson family.
Wilson, Hall, 1847-1916.
Wilson, Lewis Feuilliteau, 1804-1873.
Wilson, Mary Elizabeth Chamberlin, 1815-1895.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in sixteen series by individual and further subdivided by document type or subject where necessary.

Contents List

Series 1: William McPherson (1748?-1831), Jefferson County, Va. (now W. Va.)

Box 1

Scope and Content

Diary, 1827-1828; letter, 1826.

Series 2: Jonas Chamberlin (d. 1794), Berkeley County, Va. (now W. Va.) 1790-1817

Box 1 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Accounts, 1790-1796; list of land warrants; estate materials, 1795-1801; Mrs. Elizabeth Chamberlin's accounts, 1802-1817

Series 3: Elijah Chamberlin (d. 1818), Charles Town, Jefferson County, Va. (now W. Va.) 1790-1858

Box 1 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Letters, 1798-1817; accounts, 1795-1817; wheat and flour milling (James Proctor estate, receipts); commonplace book, 1790-1792; miscellany; estate materials, 1826-1858

Series 4: Mary (McPherson) Chamberlin (1780?-1860), Charles Town, Jefferson County, Va. (now W. Va.)

Box 1 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Accounts, 1819-1867; miscellany; estate materials, 1849-1869

Series 5: Samuel MacPherson (1798-1873), Charles Town, Va. and Baltimore, Md.

Box 2

Scope and Content

Correspondence, 1820-1868; accounts, 1828-1838; miscellany, 1821-1828

Series 6: Jane MacPherson (d. 1877), Charles Town, Va. (now W. Va.) and Baltimore, Md. 1833-1875

Box 2 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Correspondence, 1836-1875; accounts, 1833-1836, 1858-1867; miscellany.

Series 7: Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson (1804-1873), Gerrardstown and Hedgesville, Berkeley County, Va. (W. Va.)

Subseries 7.1: Correspondence, 1831-1873

Box 3

Subseries 7.2: Loose accounts, 1833-1872

Box 4

Subseries 7.3: Presbyterian Church materials, 1832-1872

Box 5

Scope and Content

Berkeley County, Va. (now W. Va.) and Shenandoah County, Va., churches, marriage licences, Winchester Presbytery.

Subseries 7.4: Post Office records and miscellany 1836-1845

Box 6

Scope and Content

Woodstock, Va., Post Office records, 1836-1845; personal miscellany; Emeline (Forman) Wilson letters.

Series 8: Mary Elizabeth (Chamberlin) Wilson (1815-1895), Gerrardstown and Hedgesville, Berkeley County, Kabletown, Jefferson County, W. Va.

Subseries 8.1: Correspondence, 1844-1894

Box 7-12

Scope and Content

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent

Subseries 8.2: Accounts, scrapbooks and miscellany 1837-1891

Box 12 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Accounts, 1837-1891; scrapbooks (second volume filed oversize after this box); miscellany.

Series 9: Valerius Winchester Wilson (1839-1902), Guinea Station, Woodford, Va., and Hedgesville, W. Va.

Box 13

Scope and Content

Correspondence, 1871-1896; accounts, 1854-1887; lease, 1873

Series 10: Edwin Lindsley Wilson (1845-1915), Gerrardstown, W. Va., and Waterford, Loudoun County, Va.

Box 13 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Correspondence, 1866-1908; accounts, 1865-1886; Gerrardstown Presbyterian Church.

Series 11: Nannie Elizabeth (Dupuy) Wilson (1849-1925), Gerrardstown, W. Va., and Waterford, Loudoun County, Va.

Box 13 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Series 12: Hall Wilson (1847-1916), Gerrardstown and Kabletown, W. Va.

Subseries 12.1: Correspondence, 1867-1910

Box 14-18

Scope and Content

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Subseries 12.2: Accounts, Political materials, and miscellany, 1859-1915

Box 19

Scope and Content

Loose accounts, 1859-1915; agricultural materials, 1868-1908; Democratic party activities; 1891-1908; Jefferson County school trustee, 1873-1884; Gerrardstown Presbyterian Church, 1893-1899; personal miscellany.

Series 13: Mary Emma (Seibert) Wilson (b. 1850), Gerrardstown and Hedgesville, W. Va.

Box 20

Scope and Content

Correspondence, 1864-1909; student essays and exercises, 1867-1869; miscellany

Series 14: Charles Lee Wilson (1856-1889), Kabletown, W. Va., San Francisco, Calif., and Astoria, Oregon.

Box 21

Scope and Content

Correspondence, 1870-1889; accounts, 1875-1889; Hampden-Sydney College, 1871-1874; letters of recommendation, 1876-1888; St. Matthews Hall; newspaper clippings; notes and essay, 1887; general miscellany.

Series 15: Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson (b. 1873), Gerrardstown, W. Va.

Box 22

Scope and Content

Correspondence, 1883-1908

Series 16: Family miscellany 1796-1944

Box 22 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Chamberlin, Seibert and Wilson family members, 1796-1944.