

John T. L. Preston papersMS.0240

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1806-1889



Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MS.0240

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/322

Unit Date

1806-1889

Language

English

Creator

Preston, John T. L. (John Thomas Lewis), 1811-1890

Extent

0.69 cubic feet 1 2.5-inch legal document box and 1 5-inch legal document box

Physical Location

Manuscripts stacks

Repository

Virginia Military Institute Archives

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

There are no restrictions.

Conditions Governing Access

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Preferred Citation

John T. L. Preston papers, 1806-1889. MS 0240. VMI Archives, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia.

Biographical / Historical

John Thomas Lewis Preston (1811-1890) was one of the founders of VMI. He served at VMI as a member of the first Board of Visitors (1839) and as a Professor of Modern Languages from 1839 to 1875. During the Civil War he was on the staff of General Stonewall Jackson.

Scope and Contents

The John T. L. Preston papers consist of the personal papers of Preston, including: A farm account book (1834-1887) Bills Deeds Memoranda Receipts Correspondence A photocopy and transcription of Preston's Civil War journal ("Jottings"), which dates from his military service at Craney Island, Virginia from late July to October 1861. The original journal is held by the Library of Congress. Preston's United States passport (May 1851) Franklin Society membership certificate (1851) A typescript "brief historical sketch" of VMI written as a speech for the Institute's semi-centennial celebration in 1889 (the typescript contains handwritten corrections in ink; Preston's son delivered the address on behalf of his father). The majority of the papers relate to Preston's personal, financial, and property (land) transactions and do not involve his work at VMI.

A notable item includes a letter (dated April 24 1863) to General Stonewall Jackson (to whom Preston was related by marriage) in which Preston discusses religious and financial matters.

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Faculty—Biography

Account Books

Receipts (financial records)

Correspondence

Memorabilia

Certificates

Financial records

Speeches, Addresses, etc.

Preston, Margaret Junkin, 1820-1897

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Online Access

A portion of the John T. L. Preston papers are available online.

Description of Subordinate Components

Passport**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/4479**Unit Date** 1851**Language** English**Scope and Contents**

Passport for John T. L. Preston.

Letter from John T. L. Preston to Stonewall Jackson**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/4480**Unit Date** 1863 April 28**Language** English**Creator** Preston, John T. L. (John Thomas Lewis), 1811-1890**Scope and Contents**

Written from Lexington, Virginia. Letter regards Topics financial transactions affecting Stonewall Jackson, including the purchase of Confederate bonds and proceeds from sale of tannery. The letter also concerns religious matters, particularly the upcoming General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina.

Keywords

Lexington (Va.)—History—Civil War, 1861-1865

Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. -- General Assembly

Correspondence

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Transcription

Lexington April 28, 1863

Dr General, According to your direction I have purchased for you \$2700 of 8 prct [percent] Confed. Bonds. This leaves a small balance to your credit. The bonds are deposited in the Bank of Rockbridge.

Our tannery has been very prosperous. I have not deemed it necessary to write to you about it hitherto. But now I have to say that the concern will be ready to pay over to you in a few weeks, as your share of the profits from ten to fifteen thousand dollars (\$10,000 - 15,000). We have on hand a contract for tanning from the Government which will not be as profitable as our operations heretofore have been but it will be remunerative and [left edge] Maggie sends her love at the same time safe. If I can be of any service to you in investing your money let me know. I was informed at the VMI that there was a balance of \$50 against you on the Treasurer's Book. I told the Supt. that I would settle it out of your funds. Maggie wrote lately to Mrs. Jackson something about your house. I cannot recollect any other business items.

I expect to leave home, day after tomorrow for the Gen. Assembly at Columbia. I go with the earnest wish and prayer that this the supreme council of our branch of the church may under the guidance of the Holy Spirit be able to devise something which will be operative in impregnating the institutions of our very nation with the spirit of vital Christianity. I cannot myself think of any new mode of attempting this. We have in operation all the agencies prescribed in the Gospel and if these are used in the spirit of the Gospel they will prove sufficient. But the real battle of the Church will begin when the national struggle is closed and Peace opens the flood gates through which will flow upon society the stream of evils generated by War. Profanity, Sabbath breaking, intemperance, idleness, lawlessness and general looseness of morals may be expected partly as the reactive influence of the scenes through which the entire youthful population of the land have been called to pass. Against all this the church must lift up her banners if would maintain her own. But instead of merely maintaining her own she does not make the reorganization of things the occasion of assuming an advanced position, will she be guiltless. Dr. Palmer has replied to Dr. White who had communicated [illegible] about supplying the army with religious service. He does not express any very decided convictions upon the subject and looks to some action by the Gen. Assb. I trust it is a good Providence that has given to your corps Mr. Lacy. Remember me warmly to him.

If you can make any suggestions touching church matters, write to me at Columbia Pres. Gen. Assembly. On business at Lex. If you wish anything done before I return Gilham or Fuller will attend to it for you. My love to your wife if she is still with you. Yrs. Trly J. T. L. Preston.

Franklin Society and Library Company of Lexington certificate**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/4481**Unit Date** 1856 October 11**Language** English

Creator Franklin Society and Library Company of Lexington (Lexington, VA)

Keywords

Lexington (Va.)—History

Certificates

"Historical Sketch of the Establishment and Organization of the Virginia Military Institute"

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/4482

Unit Date 1889 July 4

Language English

Creator Preston, John T. L. (John Thomas Lewis), 1811-1890

Scope and Contents

Typescript sketch written by John T. L. Preston. It was prepared at the request of the VMI Board of Visitors to mark the Institute's semicentennial celebration. Preston had planned to deliver this as an address, but he was not able to do so and it was read by his son Reverend Dr. T. L. Preston.

The sketch includes details about events leading to the establishment of VMI, including debates in the local Franklin Society and letters to the local newspaper written by Preston under the penname "Cives" in 1835.

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Founders Day

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Semicentennial

Virginia Military Institute—Anniversaries, etc.

Pamphlet of Cives letters to the Lexington Gazette

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/4483

Unit Date 1835 (1889 reprint)

Language English

Scope and Contents

Reprint in pamphlet form of letters written by John T. L. Preston to the Lexington (Virginia) Gazette in 1835, discussing the desirability of turning the local arsenal into a military college. Preston wrote these letters under the pen name "Cives" and these are often referred to as the "Cives letters." This pamphlet was issued in 1889 to mark VMI's semicentennial.

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Lexington Arsenal (Va.)

Lexington (Va.) -- Newspapers

Franklin Society and Library Company of Lexington (Lexington, VA)

Journal photocopy and transcription

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/4566

Unit Date 1861

Language English

Extent Photocopy of the original journal and typescript transcription.

Scope and Contents

Copy and transcription of John T. L. Preston's journal, which he called "Jottings." This journal was written during his military assignment at Craney Island, Virginia in the the summer and fall of 1861.

The journal relates to his activities while with the 9th Virginia Infantry Regiment under the command of VMI Superintendent Francis H. Smith. It includes comments on the cause of the Civil War, the defense of Norfolk, Virginia, military science, and family.

Keywords

Diaries

Soldiers—Virginia—Diaries

Virginia—History—Civil War, 1861-1865

Virginia—History—Civil War, 1861-1865—Personal narratives—Confederate

Virginia -- Craney Island

Confederate States of America. Army—Virginia Infantry Regiment, 9th

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Crutchfield, Stapleton, 1835-1865

Preston, Margaret Junkin, 1820-1897

Existence and Location of Originals

The original journal is located in the Library of Congress (John Thomas Lewis Preston MMC-1936; MSS94284).

Letter from John T. L. Preston to Francis H. Smith

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/4918

Unit Date 1889 July 4

Language English

Creator Preston, John T. L. (John Thomas Lewis), 1811-1890

Scope and Contents

This letter was written on the occasion of VMI's semicentennial celebration, in which John T. L. Preston reminisces about Francis H. Smith's role in the founding and growth of VMI.

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Semicentennial

Virginia Military Institute—Anniversaries, etc.

Correspondence

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Transcription

July 4, 1889 My dear General and old-time comrade- Finis Opus Coronat The crown of a worthy work is its successful completion. How unspeakably precious is this crown, when the work is one's life work! No other work to be done, and therefore, no apprehension of failure in the future.

The proof of your work is twofold- first in rearing a noble structure upon its foundation and then in raising it from its ruins. Testimony to this work is found in the annals of the state of Virginia, in the records of successive Boards of Visitors, by the voices and the lives of the Alumni who have gone forth from its walls, and by these words from him who is the sole surviving sharer of your labors from the founding of the V. M. I. to its semi-centennial Jubilee.

But best of all is the testimony of your own conscience, that you have never swerved from your purpose, nor spared yourself in your devotion to the object you had set before you.

With the many, various, and formidable obstacles you had to encounter I am familiar, but what other and unrevealed struggles were yours, none but yourself may ever know.

The crown of a completed work is yours.

But for all true and faithful followers of the Master there is another crown laid up - a crown of glory - a crown, not for the closing of this mortal life, but a crown for the opening of an immortal life - a crown to be worn forever!

May this crown, my old friend, be yours and mine! And for this hope let us united in saying - Laus Deo!

Affectionately, J. T. L. Preston 1839-1889