

A Guide to the Rachel Paxton Papers, 1830-1962

Rachel Paxton Papers 1830-1962
1830-1962

A Collection in the Thomas Balch Library M 020
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History

Processed by: Stephanie Adams

Title Statement

A Guide to the Rachel Paxton Papers, 1830-1962

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

M 020

Language

English

Abstract

Correspondence and legal documents, with a few receipts, memoranda, and financial statements of Rachel A. Paxton, born 11 Feb 1826 in New York.

Collector

The Margaret A. Paxton Memorial for Convalescent Children, Inc.

Extent

.66 cu. ft., 8 oversized items

Repository

Thomas Balch Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection open for research.

Use Restrictions

Physical characteristics and conditions affect use of this material. Photocopying not permitted.

Acquisition Information

The Margaret A. Paxton Memorial for Convalescent Children, Inc., Leesburg, VA

Processing Information

Processed by Stephanie Adams, 1 June 2006.

Preferred Citation

Rachel Paxton Papers (M 020), Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, VA.

Accruals

2006.0082

Alternative Form Available

None

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

"Carlheim," Lewis/Edwards Architectural Surveys of Loudoun County (M 022), Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, VA.

Additional information about the Paxton family may be found at the websites of The Library of Virginia and VIVA Virtual Library of Virginia, and National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections.

Bibliography

Ancestry Library Edition, United States census, <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com>.

52nd Virginia Infantry.

Union Cemetery Leesburg, Loudoun County, Virginia: Plats A & B, 1784-1995.

Leesburg Today

Leesburg Today

Marriage Register No. 2 1865-1879, Loudoun County Circuit Court, pg. 102.

Lewis/Edwards Architectural Surveys of Loudoun County (M 022), Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, VA.

Loudoun Times

The Mirror, 7 Feb. 1889.

The Mirror, 30 Jun 1881.

Rachel Paxton Papers (M 020), Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, VA.

National Register of Historic Places - VIRGINIA (VA), Loudoun County,
<http://www.historicdistricts.com/VA/Loudoun/state.html>.

Thomas Balch Library cemetery database, <http://www.leesburgva.gov/services/library/cemetery/default.aspx>.

Western State Hospital (Va.), Admission Registers and Index, 1868-1996. Accession 41253, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Will Book 3-I page 161-163, Loudoun County Circuit Court, Loudoun County Courthouse, Leesburg, VA.

Other Finding Aid

None

Biographical Information

Rachel A. Paxton was born 11 Feb 1826 in New York. Little is known about her early life. She was married to Charles Rupert Paxton (20 Mar 1816-1 Feb 1889), a wealthy industrialist in Pennsylvania. Paxton worked as a civil engineer on the Erie Railroad as a young man, and later bought land in Alleghany County NY which he farmed. From there he moved to Bloomsburg, PA where he amassed a considerable fortune starting Bloomsburg Iron Company and serving as its president. He was also president of Bloomsburg's First National Bank, a position he retained after he left the iron company and moved to Loudoun County, VA. In 1869 Paxton came to Leesburg to purchase land on which to build a summer house. He bought a 765-acre piece of land at auction from Abner Trundle (ca. 1833-unknown), paying \$50,000.

Paxton hired New York City architect Henry C. Dudley (n.d.) to design the house. The 32-room house, called Carlheim, featured many decorative interior details such as silver hardware and elaborate plasterwork. The exterior reflects the influence of Second Empire and Italian Villa styles, and is considered an unusual example of Victorian architecture in northern VA. Additional structures on the property included a peacock house, barn and smokehouse made of sandstone. John Norris (ca. 1812), owner of Norris Lumberyard, undertook construction. Well-diggers were surprised to discover a large underground lake under the house after the structure had been built; it went dry sometime in the 1930's. In addition to the Carlheim property, Paxton also owned approximately 7,800 acres of farm land, most of it in the Broad Run area. He was regarded as a good landlord, taking much care with cultivation of the land and construction of buildings.

The Paxtons had one daughter, Margaret (ca. 1850-24 Jul 1900). She married Bolivar Christian (26 Apr 1825-17 Jul 1900), a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate Army and a lawyer in Greenville, VA, on 26 May 1875. They had one child, Charles Paxton Christian, born 8 May 1876. The child died of diphtheria 25 June 1881. Margaret and Bolivar separated, although it is not possible to ascertain when; census records for 1880 show her residing with her parents in Leesburg. Bolivar Christian died a patient in Western Virginia Hospital, to which he had been admitted several times from 1 Oct 1882 until his death. Margaret appears to have remarried. Her obituary in the Loudoun Mirror in 1900 identifies her as Mrs. Margaret Parker of Avon, NY. She was buried in Hornellsville, NY, though a stone bearing her name is also located in Union Cemetery with her parents and son.

After Charles Paxton died in 1899, Rachel Paxton continued to live at Carlheim. Towards the end of her life she devoted her time to the creation of the Margaret Paxton Memorial for Convalescent Children, a memorial to her daughter. The trust called for the house and 50 acres of land to be used to care for poor children, and established a \$30,000.00 endowment to support it. A three-person board of trustees and advisory board of visitors was named and given an additional \$5,000.00 to help institute the facility. Following Rachel Paxton's death on 30 Dec 1921, the process to shift Carlheim from residence to convalescent home began.

From 1924 to 1954 the facility came to be called the Paxton Home for Children and was used during the summer months for children recovering from illness or injury. In 1954 it became an orphanage following a court battle over the interpretation of Paxton's will. Her heirs contended that the change violated Paxton's instructions; they were over-ruled by Circuit Court Judge R.V. Snead. It continued to function as an orphanage until 1980, when it became a child care center. Paxton House, as it is commonly known, operated in this capacity until 2004.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of documents and two bound volumes, many of which are in fragile condition. There is also a metal lockbox and a large key. Inclusive dates are 1830-1962, with the bulk of the material dating from 1920-1921. The papers are largely correspondence and legal documents, with a few receipts, memoranda, and financial statements. There are also a small number of undated fragments of correspondence. Most of the letters are from Milo Acker (n.d.), Rachel Paxton's attorney in New York, regarding legal and financial matters.

The commonplace book includes handwritten entries with calculations about waterworks, arches and curves, and information about agricultural practices. There are a few places where newspaper clippings have been pasted over the text. A number of items inserted in the book have been removed and filed in folders 9-13 and OM 002 folders 2-4. They include newspaper clippings, advertisements, and instructions about using the burglar alarm system and clocks.

Oversized items consist of newspaper clippings, advertisements, a hand-tinted plat made by surveyor J.S. Oden (ca. 1820), and an account book. Dates of entries in the book range from 1867-1884. It is in poor condition and has been reused; many of the entries have newspaper clippings of recipes pasted over them.

Contents List

Box 1

Folder 1: Fragments, n.d.

Folder 2: Correspondence, memorandum, legal documents, 1927-1962

Folder 3: Correspondence, legal document, 1921

Folder 4: Correspondence, legal document, 1920

Folder 5: Correspondence, receipts, financial statements, memorandum, 1902-1918

Folder 6: Legal documents, 1883, 1888

Folder 7: Correspondence, receipt, legal document, 1871-1874

Folder 8: Commonplace Book, ca. 1830-ca. 1884

Folder 9: Commonplace Book - inserts, front of book, 1869, n.d.

Folder 10: Commonplace Book - insert pg. 40, n.d.

Folder 11: Commonplace Book - insert pg. 45, n.d.

Folder 12: Commonplace Book - insert pg. 46, n.d.

Folder 13: Commonplace Book - insert pg. 51, n.d.

Box 2

Metal lockbox and key, n.d.

Container OM 002

Folder 1: Plat, 17 Sep 1872

Folder 2: Commonplace Book - insert, front of book, 1864

Folder 3: Commonplace Book - inserts, pg. 50, ca. 1870, n.d.

Folder 4: Commonplace Books - inserts, pg. 51, n.d.

Folder 5: Account book, 1867-1884