

Butler, Eleanor and Caroline, school exercises from Belmont Academy

Eleanor and Caroline Butler school exercises from Belmont Academy
1845 and 1849

Title Statement

Butler, Eleanor and Caroline, school exercises from Belmont Academy Eleanor and Caroline Butler school exercises from Belmont Academy MSS 16517

Author: Ellen Welch

Publication Statement

Publisher: Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library
P.O. Box 400110
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4110
URL: <https://small.library.virginia.edu/>

07/06/21

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-03-05 17:40:08 +0000.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16517

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1031

Unit Date

1845 and 1849

Mixed Materials

BW 29 (box)

Container

1 (folder)

Language

English

Extent

0.04 Cubic Feet school essays and writing sample book

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased from Franklin Gilliam Rare Books by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on June 2, 2021.

Preferred Citation

MSS 16517, Eleanor and Caroline Butler school exercises from Belmont Academy, Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library.

Biographical / Historical

Eleanor Angela Isabella Butler (1832-1866) and her sister, Caroline Swanwick Butler (1834-1876) were students at the Belmont Academy in Loudon County, Va. which was founded by female abolitionist Margaret Mercer (1791-1846) in 1836. Mercer was the daughter of John Francis Mercer (1759-1821) a Virginia-born lawyer, planter, and politician (one time Governor of Maryland) in Virginia and Maryland. Ironically he was described as a staunch opponent of abolition, who voted in favor of Louisiana's secession from the Union at the state's Secession Convention. (David D. Plater's "The Butlers of Iberville Parish, Louisiana. Dunboyne Plantation in the 1800's".) Sixteen years later he sent his daughters to the school run by an abolitionist but she was also a Southern aristocrat. John Francis Mercer died in 1821 leaving 72 enslaved people and an estate that was in debt. Margaret taught schools for several years and eventually managed to pay off her share of the debt and free the enslaved people. She sent six of them to Liberia through the American Colonization Society on a ship named "The Margaret Mercer". While she was teaching school five days a week she also helped teach Sunday school. On Saturdays, she worked for the Virginia Colonization Society. Three of Mercer's cousins were also in the movement: two members of Congress: Charles Fenton Mercer and James Mercer Garnett, and the architect, John H. B. Latrobe. Mercer and Garnett were vice presidents of the Virginia Colonization Society. Latrobe was a well known supporter of colonization in Maryland.

Margaret Mercer bought Belmont Plantation, some 5 miles south east of Leesburg, built by Ludwell Lee (1760-1836), son of Richard Henry Lee. The estate was in a dilapidated state when she purchased it, either from Lee himself, or from his estate. Ludwell Lee died on March 23, 1836 at Belmont. Margaret Mercer sent out the following circular later in the year: "Circular. Belmont, October 1, 1836: Miss Mercer Being Now Prepared to Resume the Exercises of Her School at Her New Residence, at Belmont, Loudoun County,

Virginia".

Belmont was open on Sundays for the locals to attend family church services and she encouraged them all to attend: freed African Americans; children of enslaved people; and her neighbors. Initially she encountered a great deal of resistance, but she persevered. Later she persuaded Latrobe to design a chapel and services were held until the 1930's. It was destroyed by arson in the late 1960's. The residents of this part of Loudon had long memories. In the 1960's there was a move to name a new school after Mercer and it failed the Leesburg City Council by 7 to 1 votes. However the climate has changed and she was honored a few years ago by having a school named for her and historical markers placed.

Scope and Contents

One calligraphy sample book with writing by Eleanor and Caroline Butler from the Belmont Academy in Loudon County in 1845 and 1849, 5 essays signed by Eleanor, three notes on "Scenes the Moon Looks Upon", "Glass", and "Cathage" signed by C. S. Butler, and a recipe for arsenic soap. The academy was founded by female abolitionist Margaret Mercer (1791-1846)

Essays by Eleanor Angela Isabella Butler include "The Importance of Religion", "The Weaver's Daughter", "Glass: Its Discovery and Its Uses", "An Incident in American History", "Chapitre 1st". Notest by Caroline S. Butler on "Scenes the Moon Looks Upon", "Glass", "Cathage".