

Southerland, Maria Louisa letters

Maria Louisa Southerland letters

February 1860 - January 1861

Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

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Unit Date

February 1860 - January 1861

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Language

English

Creator

Weddell, Alex W. (Watson), 1841-1883

source

Parham, Maria Louise Southerland, 1840-1903

Extent

.03 Cubic Feet 1 folder (letter sized)

Condition Description

Good

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

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Biographical Note on Maria Louisa Southerland Parham

Maria Louisa Southerland Parham (1840-1903) was born in 1840 in Alabama to her parents Sabat Southerland and Maria Louise Lipscombe Southerland. Southerland would go on to marry Captain Samuel J. Parham of Granville County, North Carolina in January 1866. Captain Parham died in 1880 at the fairly young age of forty-five and left his wife with seven children. One of their sons, Sabat Southerland Parham, built the original hospital in Henderson, North Carolina and named the Maria Parham Hospital in honor of his mother.

Biographical Note on Alex Weddell

Alex Weddell (1841-1883) was born in Tarboro, North Carolina. By the summer of 1860, his family had relocated to Petersburg, Virginia, which is relatively close to Warren County. The Weddell family included Alex's mother and father and two brothers: John Archibald, born in 1839, and Virginus L., born in 1843. Alex refers to both brothers in his letters, calling one "my short brother" and the other "my long brother." John Archibald attended UVA from 1855 to 1856, and during the 1860-61 session, both Alex and Virginus were enrolled at the university. All three brothers enlisted in the Confederate army. John and Virginus died during the war, but Alex survived, later becoming an Episcopal minister in Richmond and marrying Pencie Wright in 1866. He died in Richmond, Virginia, in December 1883 of consumption.

Content Description

This collection consists of five personal letters written by University of Virginia student Alex W. Weddell to Maria Louisa Southerland between 1860 and 1861. The letters, hand-sewn with a single red thread, are dated February 24, 1860, October 30, 1860, November 16, 1860, December 10, 1860, and January 22, 1861. They are intimate in nature, discussing the friendship and relationships between Alex and Maria, as well as referencing shared acquaintances. The envelope is addressed to Maria L. Southerland at Jones' White Sulphur Springs in Warren County, North Carolina. In 1860, Warren County was the wealthiest county in the state, and the town of Warrenton was home to two prominent resorts featuring hotels, hot springs, and academies for young men and women. Jones' Springs was owned by William Duke Jones, who had six children with his first wife, Mary Speed, and seven more with his second wife, Angelina Peete. In one letter from December 1860, Alex recalls spending "last summer" in Warrenton, North Carolina, at Jones' Springs, where he socialized and likely met Maria.

The letters mention a wide social circle at Jones' Springs, with references to at least thirty different individuals and commentary on their marriage prospects. In one instance, Alex asks how "the happy brood is progressing," referring to the young women at Jones'. Ella Jones, daughter of William Duke Jones, appears in three of the five letters. Although Alex says little about his academic life at UVA, he does mention "the anniversary of the Wash. Soc" in January 1861 and references hearing "the American warbler, Patti," a nod to Adelina Patti's performance in Richmond on October 29, 1860. Notably, the letters do not mention the

looming Civil War, which would begin in April 1861. Also included are photographs of a portrait of Southerland and two copies of photos of Weddell, provided by the donors.

Keywords

University of Virginia--Students--Correspondence
Friendship

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Parham, Maria Louise Southerland, 1840-1903