

WILLIAM NEWTON MERCER PAPERS
Mss. 292, 1051, 1233, 1364
Inventory

Compiled by
Randy Penninger

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

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Proper acknowledgement of LLMVC materials must be made in any resulting writing or publications. The correct form of citation for this manuscript group is given on the summary page. Copies of scholarly publications based on research in the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections are welcomed.

SUMMARY

Size	2 linear feet, 2 microfilm reels
Geographic Locations	Louisiana, Mississippi, Illinois, New York, Kentucky, Washington, D.C., Ontario, Paris
Inclusive Dates	1789-1936
Bulk Dates	1827-1874
Languages	English, French, Spanish
Summary	Collection consists of diaries, correspondence, and business and personal papers of William Newton Mercer (1792-1874), surgeon and planter of Adams County, Mississippi. Mercer also was a financier and owner of extensive real estate interests in New Orleans, Louisiana. The collection also pertains to the management of his plantations and real estate holdings, philanthropic work, and personal and family matters.
Access Restrictions	Access to original Henry Clay letters and Abraham Lincoln letter requires curatorial approval; use photocopies.
Reproduction Note	Photocopies must be made from microfilm when available.
Copyright	For those materials not in the public domain, copyright is retained by the descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
Related Collections	William Newton Mercer Inventory and Slave List, Mss. 5210 Anna and Sarah Butler Correspondence, Mss. 581 Butler Family Papers, Mss. 893, 965, 1026, etc. Thomas Butler and Family Papers, Mss. 2850 Benjamin Farar Papers, Mss. 1364 Samuel J. Peters, Jr. Diary, Mss. 1355
Citation	William Newton Mercer Papers, Mss. 292, 1051, 1233, etc. Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
Alternate Format Available	Microfilm 5322, Series I, Part 3, reels 1-3; Microfilm 5322, Series H, reel 24; Microfilm 6061, Series B, Part 4, reels 9-10
Stack Location(s)	U:1; UU:79-81; Vault:1; OS:M; MSS.MF:M

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

William Newton Mercer was born in Cecil County, Maryland, in 1792. He studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. During the War of 1812, Mercer served as an assistant surgeon in the U.S. Army. Following the war, he was stationed in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Natchez, Mississippi, as an Army Post-Surgeon. Upon retirement from the military in 1821, Mercer established a private medical practice in Natchez. He married Anna Eliza Farar (1796-1839) of Adams County, Mississippi, in 1823. The Mercers had two daughters, Mary (1825-1836) and Anna (circa 1832-1851). The family lived at Laurel Hill Plantation in Adams County.

Mercer owned four plantations in Adams County--Buckhurst, Ellis Cliffs, Ormond, and Laurel Hill. He also owned lands in Coahoma County, Mississippi; Marshall and Macoupin counties in Illinois; and properties in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Mercer served as president of the trustees of Natchez Academy; president of the board of administrators of the University of Louisiana (now Tulane University); and president of the Bank of Louisiana. He was a member of Christ Church in New Orleans and provided financially for St. Anna's Asylum in New Orleans and for the construction of St. Anna's Chapel (Episcopal) in New Orleans.

Mercer retired to New Orleans following the death of his daughter, Anna, in 1851. His residence on Canal Street is now occupied by the Boston Club. Although a Unionist, Mercer refused to sign an oath of allegiance to the United States during the Federal occupation of New Orleans. As a result, much of his property was confiscated by the order of General Benjamin F. Butler, commander of the occupying forces in New Orleans. Following the Civil War, the property was returned. Mercer died in New Orleans in 1874.

[Additional information on William Newton Mercer can be found in *The Unhurried Years* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1948) by Pierce Butler; *Jewell's Crescent City Illustrated* (New Orleans, La.: 1873, pages 203-208) by Edwin L. Jewell; *Standard History of New Orleans, Louisiana* (Chicago, Il.: Lewis Publishing Company, pages 214-215) by Henry Rightor (editor); *The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District, 1860-1880* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1983) by Michael Wayne.]

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Collection consists of diaries, correspondence, and business and personal papers of William Newton Mercer (1792-1874), pertaining to the management of his plantations and other real estate holdings and investments; philanthropic work; and personal and family matters. There are 47 diaries (1848-1874), giving a daily account of Mercer's financial transactions, interspersed with entries or mention of a few personal activities in connection with business matters. A series of letters from the manager of Mercer's four plantations in Mississippi gives detailed information concerning the problems of a planter during the Civil War, particularly with slaves, freedmen, and Federal troops, and difficulties and problems encountered in the postwar period. Another group of papers pertains to Mercer's difficulties with Federal military authorities in New Orleans, Louisiana, over his refusal to take an oath of allegiance to the United States, and the seizure of some of his city properties.

Other records pertain to Mercer's business interests and activities in Illinois, New York, and Europe. A typescript of Mercer's diary for his trip from Baltimore, Maryland, to New Orleans in 1816, via the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, has been edited and published. Legal materials consist of documents substantiating Anna Farar Mercer's claims to land in Mississippi, bills of slaves for slaves, and letters and notes concerning loans made by William Nelson Mercer.

In addition to Mercer's plantations in Mississippi and real estate holdings in New Orleans, he owned land in Marshall and Macoupin counties in Illinois and in Coahoma County, Mississippi. Material documents the agents handling those properties for Mercer. He conducted business with brokerage firms in New Orleans; New York City, New York; Newport, Rhode Island; and England.

The collection includes requests from charitable organizations, including St. Anna's Asylum in New Orleans, and the contract and related papers pertaining to the building of St. Anna's Chapel (Episcopal) in New Orleans. Letters pertaining to personal loans, business transactions, family problems, and business and personal associates are scattered throughout the collection. Correspondence includes a series of letters from Wilmer Shields, manager of Mercer's four plantations in Adams County, Mississippi. Additional correspondents are Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Butler, and Mercer's cousin, Eliza Young, who was a plantation partner.

Eight record books list Mercer's assets, including stocks, notes payable, real estate, and cash payments made from 1851-1873. Deeds, land patents, receipts, tax records, and other items relate to Mercer's extensive land holdings in Mississippi, New Orleans, and Illinois. Two volumes chronicle the fatal illness of Mercer's daughter, Anna, who died of tuberculosis in 1851. Architectural drawings (1858) are included.

None of the material in this collection relates to Mercer's military service or his medical practice. William Newton Mercer's papers on file in the Howard-Tilton Library at Tulane University in New Orleans consist of correspondence, bills and receipts, factors' statements, and related items, which are available on microfilm. Some of these papers record Mercer's travels in the eastern United States, England, France, and Italy from 1836-1837.

LIST OF SERIES AND SUBSERIES

Series I. Correspondence, 1827-1874, undated

Subseries 1. Correspondence, 1827-1874, undated

Subseries 2. Wilmer Shields Letters, 1853-1869

Series II. Financial Records, 1827-1874, undated

Subseries 1. Financial Records, 1827-1874, undated

Subseries 2. Succession of William Newton Mercer, 1869, 1874

Series III. Slave Records, 1827-1861

Series IV. Land Records, 1789-1869

Subseries 1. Mississippi Property, 1789-1861

Subseries 2. New Orleans Property, 1844-1869

Subseries 3. Illinois Property, 1853-1867

Series V. Diaries, Financial Books, Reprints and Typescript, 1816-1874, 1936

Series VI. Microfilm, 1832-1854, undated

Series VII. Oversize, 1824-1858

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I. Correspondence, 1827-1874, undated (405 items)

Personal and business correspondence relating primarily to personal loans, business transactions, and family problems. Also includes a series of letters from Wilmer Shields, manager of William Newton Mercer's four plantations in Adams County, Mississippi, that provide detailed information about problems encountered by the planter during and immediately following the Civil War. Family correspondence is provided primarily by Eliza Young, a cousin of Mercer who also maintained a plantation partnership with Mercer. Correspondents include Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln. [NOTE: The original letters of Clay and Lincoln are located in Vault:1. Photocopies are interfiled with the correspondence by date.]

Series II. Financial Records, 1827-1874, undated (640 items)

Bills, receipts, invoices, and promissory notes.

Series III. Slave Records, 1827-1861 (55 items)

Bills of sale for slaves purchased by William Newton Mercer. Also includes lists of slaves at Mercer's plantations.

Series IV. Land Records, 1789-1869 (329 items)

Deeds, receipts, tax records, and correspondence relating to William Newton Mercer's extensive land holdings in Mississippi; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Illinois.

Series V. Diaries, Financial Books, Reprints, and Typescript, 1816-1874, 1936 (64 volumes)

Primarily daily accounts of William Newton Mercer's various business transactions, interspersed with entries or mention of a few personal activities in connection with business matters. Included are two volumes that chronicle the final illness of Mercer's daughter, Anna, who died of tuberculosis in 1851.

Series VI. Microfilm, 1832-1854, undated (two reels: 215 items)

Microfilm copy of William Newton Mercer Papers on file at Tulane University in New Orleans, consisting of correspondence, bills and receipts, factor's statements, and related items and papers.

Letters (1836-1837) from Natchez correspondents to Mercer during his travels with his family in the United States and Europe reflect the extent and management by Mercer of his properties and provide insight into the Panic of 1837 and its ramifications for Natchez businessmen and planters. Among the correspondents is Stephen Duncan.

The remainder of the collection consists of papers recording Mercer's travels in the eastern United States, England, France, and Italy in 1836-1837. Includes bills and receipts, travel guides, and business cards. Also includes a pamphlet containing a speech given by Powhatan Ellis at a dinner in Natchez in 1832.

Series VII. Oversize, 1824-1858 (55 items)

Boxed oversize materials include land patents (1837-1839) to William Newton Mercer's property in Illinois.

Items in folder include a survey map (1824) of Mercer's properties in Adams County, Mississippi, architectural drawings (1858) for St. Anna's Chapel in New Orleans, and Mercer's passport.

INDEX TERMS

Materials relating to these people, places, and things can be found in the series indicated, as represented by their numbers.

Adams County (Miss.)	I, VI
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Bank of Louisiana.	IV
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Buckhurst Plantation (Miss.)	I, V
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Canada--Description and travel.	I, II
Christ Church Cathedral (New Orleans, La.)	II
Clay, Henry, 1777-1852.	I
Coahoma County (Miss.)--History--19th century.	III
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MERCER (WILLIAM NEWTON) PAPERS
1789-1936

Mss. 292, 1051, 1233, etc.
LSU LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Slave records--Mississippi.	III
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CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>	
UU:79	1	1-7	Series I. Correspondence, 1827-1874, undated Correspondence, 1827-1874, undated.	
	2	8-10	Wilmer Shields letters, 1853-1869.	
	Vault:1	--	1	Henry Clay letters, 1846-1852 (Access restricted. Use copies. Transcript interfiled with correspondence).
		--	1	Abraham Lincoln letter, 1862 (Access restricted. Use copies. Transcript interfiled with correspondence).
UU:79	2	11-14	Series II. Financial Records, 1827-1874, undated Financial records, 1827-1870.	
	3	15-18	Financial records, 1871-1874, undated	
		19	Succession of William Newton Mercer, 1869, 1874.	
		20	Series III. Slave Records, 1827-1861	
UU:80		21	Series IV. Land Records, 1789-1869 Land records, Mississippi property, 1789, 1805, 1824, 1830-1861.	
	4	22-23	New Orleans property, 1844-1869.	
		24-25	Illinois property, 1853-1867.	
		26	Series V. Diaries, Financial Books, Reprints, and Typescript, 1816-1874, 1936 Reprints and typescript, 1936: "From Baltimore to New Orleans in 1816: Diary of William Newton Mercer," edited by E. A. Davis and J. C. L. Andreassen (reprint of two 1936 articles, one from the <i>Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly</i> and one from the <i>Journal of Southern History</i>); typescript of Mercer's diary entries, July 26-October 23, 1816.	
	5	27	Bank book, 1872-1873 (Volume 1).	
		28	Collection book, 1853-1863. Records of notes collected by the Bank of Louisiana; list of notes past due belonging to Mercer and deposited with the bank (Volume 2).	
		29-48	Diaries, 1848-1859. Daily entries recording Mercer's financial transactions (Volumes 3-22).	

<u>Stack</u>			
<u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>
UU:80	6	49-70	Diaries, 1859-1870. Daily entries recording Mercer's financial transactions (Volumes 23-44).
UU:81	7	71-76	Diaries, 1870-1874. Daily entries recording Mercer's financial transactions (Volumes 45-50).
		77-81	Journals, 1851-1866. Ledger entries for Mercer's business and plantation transactions (Volumes 51-55).
		82	Travel diaries, 1836-1837 (Volumes 56-57).
		83	Anna Mercer notebook, 1851 (Volume 58).
		84-85	Medical diaries, 1851. Mercer's daily account of the terminal illness of his daughter, Anna (Volumes 59-60).
		86	Eliza Young record book, 1867-1868. Young's records of disposition of valuables and keepsakes (Volume 61).
		87	Household cash book, 1868-1869. Daily account of food purchased for the Mercer household (Volume 62).
		88	Cash book, 1872-1873 (Volume 63).
	8	--	Photographs of maps and documents, 1826-1899. These 11 photographs, taken from original maps and documents, are of items related to Laurel Hill Plantation in Natchez, Mississippi. Numbers 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 pertain to the estate of Benjamin Farar. Numbers 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, and 11 pertain to Laurel Hill after it was inherited by and became the property of the Mercers.
		--	Transcriptions of letters from Henry Clay to William Newton Mercer, August 13, 1834-February 29, 1852.
MSS.MF:M	--	--	Series VI. Microfilm, 1832-1854, undated Reels 1-2: Microfilm of William Newton Mercer Papers at Tulane University in New Orleans.
OS:M	--	1	Series VII. Oversize, 1824-1858 Architectural drawings, St. Anna's Chapel, New Orleans, 1858. Passport. Survey Map of property in Adam County, Mississippi, 1824. Photographic copy of "Map and survey comprising the lands and divisions of Laurel Hill, the property of Dr. W. N. Mercer," 1850.

<u>Stack</u>			
<u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>
U:1	9	--	Land patents to Illinois property, 1837-1839.