

Preferred Citation

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Online Catalog Headings**Document Types**

Autographs

Related Collections

The Sanitary Fair Collection (McA 5781.F), McAllister Collection contains a selection of autographs that were sold at Philadelphia's Great Central Fair from the booth set up by the Relics, Curiosities, and Autographs committee. The committee collected letters, cancelled bank drafts, etc., from prominent citizens in the community, and mounted them in specially printed folders annotated with the donor's name. Because they remain in their folders, they have been kept with the Sanitary Fair Collection

Biographical/Historical Notes

Like other antiquarian collectors of the nineteenth century, John A. McAllister sought and saved autographs. His father John McAllister Jr. (1786-1877) also collected autographs along with books, pamphlets, prints, newspapers, etc. The inventory he made of his entire collection, a manuscript volume held by the Library Company of Philadelphia, lists his holdings as stored both in "albums" (numbering seven) and "loose" (550+ items). As with the other articles in his collection, John McAllister Jr. assigned the autographs to his children as part of their inheritance. Two albums were left to Agnes McAllister, and her siblings William, Sarah, John, Thomas, and Wardale were to have one each. For the loose autographs, Frances, Sarah, John, and Wardale each received one hundred, and fifty were to be received each by William, Agnes, and Thomas.

With the exception of the Civil War material in Series III, which is thought to have been assembled by John A. McAllister himself, there is no way to tell the provenance of the pieces in this collection. While it is possible that some were originally in the collection of John McAllister Jr., these autographs are primarily clipped signatures and as such have no other identifying features.