

Benjamin P. Poore (1820-1887), and William Buell Sprague (1795-1876), and specifically for Civil War material, Benson J. Lossing (1813-1891) and John Russell Bartlett (1805-1886).

Why John A. McAllister chose the Library Company as a final repository for his collection is also unknown as, unlike his two grandfathers, father, and two brothers, he was not a LCP shareholder, and had had for more than thirty years a close relationship with the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, making donations of collection material there through the early 1880s and steering other donors their way (see, for instance, the letter from J. Elizabeth Jones in Series I). The minutes of the Library Company directors shed little light on the matter aside from a mention on April 4, 1886, that

A communication was received from Mr. John A. McAllister offering to give the company a collection of illustrations and printed matter relating to the civil war, which he said had cost him the labor of twenty years and more than a thousand dollars of money.

Ten years later, and a few months after his death, the minutes mentioned that “There are 43 boxes of McAllister accumulations” but no specifics about which parts of his collections they were. The Library Company paid John A. McAllister what is perhaps the antiquarian’s ultimate compliment—and one justly earned—by stating in the 1886 *Annual Report* its gratitude to him for the gift of his “valuable collection . . . which cannot fail to be of interest to the student of this period of the history of our country.”

For additional information about McAllister, his Civil War material, and his circle of colleagues, see “John A. McAllister Collects the Civil War,” in *The Magazine Antiques* 170, no. 2 (August 2006), p. 102-107.

Collection Overview

The John A. McAllister Papers contain letters written to McAllister during his lifetime and career as a collector of manuscript materials, prints, photographs, and ephemera. It also holds letters and notes written by McAllister, and a few letters written to his father and siblings, as well as to the optical firm. The collection is arranged in three series: Series I. John A. McAllister Correspondence; Series II, John A. McAllister Writings; Series III, McAllister Family Papers.

Because both John McAllisters, the father and the son, had antiquarian interests, it is sometimes not clear to whom letters were addressed; in addition, there are almost no mailing envelopes in the files. Some distinctions can be made through content, date, or commentary—for instance, many of the writers ask “Mr. McAllister” to extend greetings to his “honored father”—otherwise, any generic time-appropriate letters remain filed in Series I, while those obviously intended for John McAllister Jr. have been placed in Series III. Correspondence that was first