

Church” entitled “Battle of Fourth and Fifth Streets, or defence of St. Mary’s Church.” The struggle described in the poem occurred in the spring of 1822, when some of the parishioners of Philadelphia’s historic Catholic Church attempted to retain their ex-communicated priest Rev. William Hogan.

In addition to collecting antiquarian items, McAllister also collected antiquarian memories. One example is a letter from the 95-year-old former newspaper publisher Naphtali Phillips (1773-1870), written out for him by his grandson, which gives his first-person account of the Grand Federal Procession of 1787. McAllister saved six letters from Scottish-born author Grant Thorburn (1773-1863) then living in New Haven, CT. One carries a précis of his life story, and another enclosed his seven-page biographical sketch of Thomas Paine. And from 86-year-old Philadelphia printer Robert Carr (1778-1866) there are three letters, one in which he refutes the legend that he was an apprentice to Benjamin Franklin, though he was to Franklin’s grandson B.F. Bache, and tells of seeing George and Martha Washington regularly as he lived in their neighborhood. Robert Wickliffe (1775-1859), in Lexington, KY, wrote McAllister a reminiscence of steamboat inventor John Fitch (1743-1798), which was printed by Thompson Westcott in his 1857 book on Fitch. Seeking contemporary information on contemporary times, McAllister asked for and received from architect Thomas U. Walter (1804-1887) a list of fifty public buildings that he had designed in the United States through November 1860.

The folder for the artist Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860) holds evidence that McAllister (or possibly his father) attempted to obtain from him an autograph of his father Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827) in 1851. After apologizing for having mislaid the request, Peale responded, “I have had so many applications for my Father’s autograph, that I doubt if I could find one.” A later letter discusses a frame that Peale had chosen for John McAllister Jr., most likely for the portrait of George Washington that he had commissioned in 1859. Peale’s receipt for the portrait itself is in Series II with John McAllister Jr.’s correspondence. Peale’s folder also has a transcription of a W.C. Bryant poem “The Skies” written in Peale’s hand. Additional Peale family material can be found in the folder for Titian Peale (1799-1885), which has ten letters from him discussing his father and his work, and mentioning that his wife is arranging the family papers. In one letter, Peale states quotes from C.W. Peale’s letters regarding his earliest production of mezzotints.

Some of the most poignant material in the series is in the folder for Albert Newsam (1809-1864), a deaf artist that McAllister was instrumental in supporting after he became unable to work as a result of a stroke. McAllister helped to find him an assisted living situation, provided him with magnifying glasses, photographs to copy, and other supplies. When Newsam was near death, McAllister arranged to have him baptized by the Rev. Thomas Gallaudet (1822-1902). At McAllister’s request, Gallaudet wrote out the remarks he made at the artist’s funeral; that letter is in Gallaudet’s folder. McAllister ended up with some of Newsam’s papers (now in collection McA MSS 003), as well as a portfolio containing Newsam’s copies of his own prints, which he gave to McAllister before he died. Those 162 lithographs, nearly all portraits, are now in the