

Historical Society of Pennsylvania (collection V-100) where McAllister placed them in April 1881.

Family letters include five written by Frederick and Godfrey W. Steinbrenner, the brothers of McAllister's wife Annette. Both men were living in New York and neither was drafted, but like everyone else they were touched by the wartime frenzy going on in the city in 1861. With thousands of soldiers from New York State and New England arriving in the city on their way to Philadelphia, the parks were turned into campgrounds, and barracks rose in Castle Garden. Another sort of excitement was told in a letter of April 18, 1861: "Last night a crowd broke in to the Herald office & took away their type—they found two editions of the paper, one for the North and one for the South." Because soldiers were passing through in both directions, the brothers wrote news they had heard from men returning from duty in the Confederate states. A second folder under the Steinbrenner name holds letters from non-family members looking for other Steinbrenners. The letters from wealthy New York cigar importer Gustavus W. Faber (1823-1895) show him to be related to Annette McAllister through his aunt, her grandmother Christianna Weber (d. 1867).

William Y. McAllister wrote in a family genealogy about John A. McAllister: "In 1848 he went with his Brother Thomas to Louisville Ky and was in some small business but unsuccessful." Letters that reference McAllister's venture, the Louisville Mustard Manufactory, can be found in folders for Edward Riddle, Charles Stansbury, and for his father John McAllister Jr., who wrote to him in Louisville. Other evidence of the business exists in the Marian S. Carson Collection at the Library of Congress, which has a selection of package labels for flour of mustard, pepper, table salt, and ground rice prepared by the company.

A folder of unidentified correspondents holds several letters whose signatures can not be deciphered. Among them is a letter to Annette McAllister thanking her for pickles she had sent to the army hospital on Filbert Street at Christmas in 1864. Also in the file is an 1869 printed letter from a group of prominent New Yorkers, including Peter Cooper, Hamilton Fish, and Marshall O. Roberts, asking for subscriptions to underwrite a painting of Admiral Farragut by William Page that would be given to the Emperor of Russia; the signatures are printed as well.

Whatever their original reason for writing to John A. McAllister, most of the correspondents in Series I eventually turned their thoughts to the subject of the Civil War. Rev. George Duffield Jr. (1818-1888) wrote from his home near Detroit in 1862 to somewhat cheerfully request that a dozen copies of his portrait photograph be sent to his wife, but he closed his letter on a sobering note, making reference to one of the McAllister firm's other great specialties:

If you have any telescopes that can see the end of the war—or the final effect of the Proclamation—I should like to get a peep thru that into futurity. Just now your humble servant is in the deepest kind of a fog—and whether it is any clearer at Phila or Washington he is much inclined to dubitate.