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## Alexander Family Papers (MSS 505)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives  
 Department of Library Special Collections  
 Western Kentucky University  
 Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 505    ALEXANDER Family Papers**

2 boxes. 40 folders. 457 items. 1828-1936. Originals.

1954.14.2

***BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE***

The Alexander family's American roots lay in Henry County, Virginia, where John Alexander (1741-1830), a Revolutionary War veteran and friend of Patrick Henry, settled with his wife Lucy Nunn. In 1805, John Alexander moved his family to Marrowbone Creek in Cumberland County, Kentucky.

John and Lucy Alexander were the parents of 11 children, among them Reuben Renfru Alexander (1785-1864). In 1807, Reuben married Elizabeth (Eliza) Anderson Miller (1784-1855). Reuben's brother Robert M. Alexander (1778-1853) married Eliza's sister Mary Ann Miller, and another sister, Nancy Dabney Miller, married Patrick Henry Fontaine (1775-1852). Both Reuben and Robert Alexander remained in Cumberland County, while Patrick Fontaine and his family emigrated from Henry County, Virginia to Pontotoc County, Mississippi in 1836.

Reuben and Eliza Alexander's children included Reuben Miller Alexander (b. 1820), known as "Miller," and Charles Fontaine Alexander (1819-1895), known as "Fontaine" or "Font." In 1845, Charles Fontaine Alexander married Maria Louisa Lucas (1817-1902), known as "Lou." A sister of Maria Louisa's, Martha Ann Lucas, married Robert Graham in 1836. Martha and several other members of the Lucas family resided in Warren County, Kentucky.

***COLLECTION NOTE***

This collection consists of genealogical data, correspondence, business, legal and other personal papers of the Alexander, Fontaine and related families, primarily of Henry County, Virginia; Pontotoc County, Mississippi; and Cumberland, Metcalfe and Warren counties in Kentucky. Box 1, Folder 1 includes genealogical notes on the families, but these notes are intended to show relationships among the individuals featured most prominently in this collection and should not be construed as a comprehensive genealogy.

Box 1 contains primarily genealogy, correspondence and family estate and business papers. Included are notes, clippings and correspondence on Alexander and Fontaine history and genealogy (Folders 2-5) and papers regarding the estate of Waters Nunn (the nephew of John Alexander's wife Lucy), of which Reuben Alexander was administrator (Folder 6).

Letters of Patrick H. Fontaine (Box 1, Folder 7) to his brother-in-law Reuben Alexander and to Reuben's son Charles Fontaine Alexander begin just prior to his relocation from Henry County, Virginia, to Pontotoc, Mississippi in 1836. He describes the topography and agricultural resources of his new home in detail, and provides family news. Of interest are his comments in 1840 about presidential candidate William Henry Harrison, in which he acidly forecasts the "happy times" to come from bank reform and the miscegenation that will follow the abolition of slavery. Patrick also refers to Reuben's acquisition of land in Chickasaw County, Mississippi.

Reuben Alexander's correspondence includes a letter (Box 1, Folder 8) written from Alabama to his son Charles Fontaine Alexander describing his plan to return home to Cumberland County, Kentucky with fifteen slaves; another letter describes his farming activities and provides family news. Letters to Reuben Alexander (Box 1, Folder 9) come mostly from relatives in Virginia, Mississippi and Texas. Many of the correspondents strive to report news of other family members and express concern for Reuben as he grows older. John and Mary Reamey write from Henry County, Virginia, with updates on the whereabouts of members of the Fontaine, Nunn, Cole and Pace families. A niece, Nancy Brooks, the daughter of Patrick H. Fontaine, writes from Pontotoc, Mississippi of her mother and siblings, and describes in detail a destructive tornado that passed through the area in spring 1855. Nancy's brother Edward Fontaine, a clergyman, writes from Mississippi of his family and, in 1859, of his dismay over Reuben's son Miller's "unscriptural" decision to free his slaves and settle in Iowa among "pious Yankees." Letters from Miller to his father admit to financial struggles and business inexperience, but are strongly Christian-themed and declare his revulsion at the idea of "owning a fellow creature." At the outbreak of the Civil War, a niece's husband, Frederick P. Hood, writes Reuben from Texas of his support for the Confederacy, and William Hamilton Stockwell, a granddaughter's husband, writes from Boyle County, Kentucky in 1864 expressing weariness of the war and concern for Reuben's safety from Federal soldiers and guerrillas. Other papers of Reuben Alexander in this collection consist of a few business papers, including two powers of attorney granted to him in connection with a lawsuit and an estate (Box 1, Folder 10); and Reuben's own 1858 will and estate settlement documents, including receipts from heirs, accounts, sale inventories, and surveys of his land in Cumberland County (Box 1, Folder 11).

Letters of Reuben's son, Charles Fontaine Alexander of Cumberland County, Kentucky (Box 1, Folder 12) include his claim for loss of a horse during the Civil War and his description of a reunion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Infantry. Some letters written to Charles Fontaine Alexander (Box 1, Folder 13) are related to business, but most are from family members. Of interest are letters from cousin Nancy Brooks discussing his marriage prospects; from brother John and cousin Thomas T. Alexander with gossip about the marriages of two relatives, both named Martha; from a cousin, John Dabney Alexander, and his son regarding the threat of cholera in 1850 and 1854 (from which Dabney ultimately died); and from a nephew, William A. Graham, in Texas warning of the South's "everlasting hatred" of the North after the Civil War. Miscellaneous business and legal papers of Charles Fontaine Alexander (Box 1, Folder 14) include accounts for goods and services, business licence and property tax receipts, and deeds. Two letters of a physician at the Western Lunatic Asylum in Hopkinsville, Kentucky (Box 1, Folder 15), one to Dr. John E. Alexander and the other to his brother Charles Fontaine Alexander, appear to relate to an episode of severe depression suffered by the latter in 1869.

Letters of Martha (Lucas) Graham (Box 1, Folder 16) are written from Warren County, Kentucky to her sister Maria Louisa Alexander, brother-in-law Charles Fontaine Alexander, and their daughters Martha Caroline "Carrie" Alexander and Mary L. Alexander in Cumberland

County. Martha's husband Robert (who appears to have died in the mid-1850s) and sons add brief notes to some of her letters. They contain much family, farm and local news, including descriptions of an 1854 cholera outbreak in Bowling Green, and Martha also expresses concern in 1860 over a rumored insurrection by African Americans in Cumberland County. About half of the letters are written during the Civil War, and richly detail Martha's experience of military activity in Warren County and the resulting deprivations for civilians. She writes in summer 1861 of local anxiety over the imminent invasion by Confederates from Tennessee, and of divided loyalties among citizens. As the Confederates withdraw from Bowling Green at the approach of Federal troops early in 1862, she writes vividly of the destruction and threatened burning of the city by Confederates and its shelling by Federals; of an encounter between an overjoyed local supporter and Federal soldiers; of denial by some Federals that they are fighting to free the slaves; and of the widespread theft of crops, stock and other property. After the Confederates depart, she writes of Federal movements in the area, the victimization of citizens by robbers, the recruitment of African Americans into the Union Army and subsequent desertion by some, witnesses' descriptions of the Shiloh battlefield, sickness among the troops, and rumors of men from the area joining John Hunt Morgan's company. As the Federals seek to recruit more soldiers, she becomes increasingly anxious over the possibility of her sons being drafted (one enters the Army, but another procures a substitute to serve for him at the considerable cost of \$1000). Although she despairs at the ongoing lawlessness and destruction, she is unshaken in her support of the Union.

Letters of Milton D. Alexander (Box 1, Folder 17), written to his father's cousin Charles Fontaine Alexander, discuss drawing on his financial assets in Kentucky as he attempts to enter business in Texas in 1860. After relocating to Linn County, Missouri, he also writes of money and legal matters, but in 1863 includes derogatory comments about abolitionism in the state and the recruitment of African Americans for military service by "father Abe" Lincoln.

Papers of Charles Fontaine Alexander's son Edward Henry Alexander (Box 1, Folder 18) include accounts, business letters, receipts connected with his duties as a justice of the peace for Metcalfe County, Kentucky, and a composition entitled "The Assistant Judge."

Box 2 contains miscellaneous papers relating to various members of the Alexander and associated families. Many letters (Folder 1) exchanged primarily between members of the Alexander family in Cumberland County, Kentucky and the Lucas and Graham families in Warren County dwell on family news, marriages and deaths. An 1850 letter to Maria Louisa Alexander from a brother in Barren County, Kentucky describes his dealings in slaves; a letter to Charles Fontaine Alexander from a Missouri man inquires about the burial of his brother, killed in the Civil War, on Alexander's farm; a letter from a niece in Warren County gives a gruesome account of the death of her uncle, John Winston Lucas, when hit by a train in 1868; two others describe the death of John Winston Lucas's brother Joseph in 1871 from an accidental gunshot wound; and yet another refers to two 1878 cases of yellow fever in Bowling Green, being "refugees" from the epidemic in Memphis, Tennessee.

Box 2, Folders 2-5 contain miscellaneous papers relating to Charles Fontaine Alexander's daughters Martha Caroline "Carrie" (Alexander) Bryant and Mary Louisa Alexander, principally certificates, correspondence, announcements of subscription schools, registers and programs relating to their teaching careers in Cumberland and Metcalfe counties. A former student writes Carrie from Fannin County, Texas urging her to come to teach the many Kentuckians there and to marry an "old bachelor" she has picked out for her (Folder 4).

Leases by Mary R. Alexander of St. Louis, Missouri (wife of Charles Fontaine's brother Miller Alexander) of farmland she owns in Metcalfe County (Box 2, Folder 6) include related notes and bonds of the lessees, as well as a contract for farm labor.

Papers related to the Marrowbone Steam Mill in Cumberland County, in which Charles Fontaine Alexander and other family members were stockholders (Box 2, Folder 7), include accounts, tax receipts, and settlements with principals.

The remainder of Box 2 contains miscellaneous papers relating to family matters and to organizations with which the Alexander family was associated: invitations (Folder 8), compositions (Folder 9); accounts, receipts and memoranda (Folder 10); deeds of land from and to members of the Alexander and Lucas families (Folder 11); papers for estates in which Charles Fontaine Alexander acted as administrator or executor (Folders 12 and 13); a few records for the Knob Lick (Metcalfe County) Lodge of the Independent Order of Good Templars, including a letter, perhaps by Charles Fontaine Alexander, objecting to the suspension of its charter by the Grand Lodge and mourning the problems of lodges in poorer areas of the state (Folder 14); a constitution and membership list for the Church of Christ at Knob Lick (Folder 15); stray papers relating to the Christian Church at Ashmole (Cumberland County) Kentucky (Folder 16) and the Christian Church of Antioch, the original name for Knob Lick (Folder 17); an 1883 petition opposing a road change in Metcalfe County and an undated estimate of the cost to construct a steam railway from Horse Cave, Kentucky to Antioch (Folder 18); miscellaneous news clippings of interest to the family (Folder 19); and vote summaries and a leaflet relating to 1886 elections in Metcalfe County and in Kentucky's 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional district (Folder 20). An apron used to store family papers (Folder 21) and locks of family hair are also preserved (Folder 22).

### ***SHELF LIST***

| <b>BOX 1</b> | <b>Alexander Family Papers</b>  | <b>1828-1936</b> | <b>308 items</b> |
|--------------|---|------------------|------------------|
| Folder 1     | Inventory and genealogical notes  |                  | 2 items          |
| Folder 2     | Notes on Alexander genealogy  | n.d.             | 19 items         |
| Folder 3     | Alexander Bible records   | n.d.             | 2 items          |
| Folder 4     | Alexander and Fontaine families – Correspondence relating to family history and genealogy | 1846-1922        | 19 items         |
| Folder 5     | Alexander and Fontaine families – Clippings   | 1902-1936        | 7 items          |
| Folder 6     | Waters Nunn – Estate settlement (Reuben Alexander, executor)                              | 1833-1836        | 72 items         |
| Folder 7     | Patrick Henry Fontaine – Letters of   | 1836-1842        | 4 items          |

|              |   |                  |                  |
|--------------|---|------------------|------------------|
| Folder 8     | Reuben Alexander – Letters of   | 1840-1844        | 2 items          |
| Folder 9     | Reuben Alexander – Letters to   | 1847-1864        | 29 items         |
| Folder 10    | Reuben Alexander – Business and legal papers  | 1828-1853        | 4 items          |
| Folder 11    | Reuben Alexander – Will and estate settlement   | 1858-1866        | 27 items         |
| Folder 12    | Charles Fontaine Alexander – Letters of   | 1874-1885        | 4 items          |
| Folder 13    | Charles Fontaine Alexander – Letters to   | 1840-1895        | 24 items         |
| Folder 14    | Charles Fontaine Alexander – Business and legal papers                                      | 1847-1894        | 56 items         |
| Folder 15    | Dr. James Rodman (Western Lunatic Asylum) – Letters regarding Charles Fontaine Alexander    | 1869, 1872       | 2 items          |
| Folder 16    | Martha (Lucas) Graham – Letters of  | 1849-1885        | 20 items         |
| Folder 17    | Milton D. Alexander – Letters of  | 1860-1863        | 6 items          |
| Folder 18    | E. H. Alexander – Miscellaneous papers  | 1883-1902, n.d.  | 9 items          |
| <b>BOX 2</b> | <b>Alexander Family Papers</b>  | <b>1844-1918</b> | <b>149 items</b> |
| Folder 1     | Miscellaneous family letters  | 1856-1899, n.d.  | 22 items         |
| Folder 2     | Inscription to Miss M. C. Alexander   | 1862             | 1 item           |
| Folder 3     | Mary L. Alexander – Teaching certificates and related papers                                | 1870-1902        | 5 items          |
| Folder 4     | Caroline “Carrie” Alexander – Teaching certificates and related papers                      | 1881-1897        | 9 items          |
| Folder 5     | Registers, programs, related to teaching of Mary and/or Carrie Alexander                    | 1874-1894        | 7 items          |
| Folder 6     | Mary R. Alexander and Mary E. Alexander – Leases of Metcalfe County farm and related papers | 1875-1894        | 19 items         |

|           |  |                 |          |
|-----------|--|-----------------|----------|
| Folder 7  | Marrowbone Steam Mill – Cumberland County – Business papers  | 1858-1869       | 11 items |
| Folder 8  | Invitations  | 1879-1895       | 3 items  |
| Folder 9  | Miscellaneous compositions   | 1864, n.d.      | 3 items  |
| Folder 10 | Miscellaneous accounts and receipts  | 1850-1902       | 25 items |
| Folder 11 | Miscellaneous deeds  | 1853-1915       | 10 items |
| Folder 12 | Nancy Pace – Estate papers   | 1844-1873       | 6 items  |
| Folder 13 | George Groves – Estate papers  | 1846-1850       | 2 items  |
| Folder 14 | Independent Order of Good Templars – Knob Lick, Kentucky   | 1875-1887, n.d. | 8 items  |
| Folder 15 | Knob Lick Church of Christ – Record book   | 1871-1874       | 1 item   |
| Folder 16 | Christian Church – Ashmole, Kentucky – Missionary Society minutes; letters of good standing        | 1871, 1875      | 2 items  |
| Folder 17 | Christian Church of Antioch – Deed from James and Susan Withers                                    | 1873            | 1 item   |
| Folder 18 | Knob Lick (Antioch), Kentucky – Petition opposing road change; estimate to construct steam railway | 1883, n.d.      | 2 items  |
| Folder 19 | Miscellaneous newspaper clippings  | 1885-1918, n.d. | 8 items  |
| Folder 20 | Leaflet and vote summary – Elections   | 1886            | 2 items  |
| Folder 21 | Apron used to store papers   | n.d.            | 1 item   |
| Folder 22 | Keepsake locks of hair   | n.d.            | 1 item   |

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

MSS ALEXANDER Family Papers 1828-1936  
505

Correspondence, business and estate papers, deeds and miscellaneous records of the Alexander, Fontaine, Lucas, Graham and associated families, principally of Henry County, Virginia; Cumberland, Metcalfe and Warren counties in Kentucky; and Pontotoc County, Mississippi.

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**SEE or SEE ALSO**

Alexander, Carrie, 1846-1922

See:

Bryant, Martha Caroline (Alexander)

Alexander, Fontaine, 1819-1895

See:

Alexander, Charles Fontaine

Alexander, Miller, b. 1820

See:

Alexander, Reuben Miller

Campbellism

See:

Disciples of Christ

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