

**WALL FAMILY PAPERS**

Mss. 5243

Inventory

Compiled by  
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Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections  
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library  
Louisiana State University Libraries  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

2016

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**SUMMARY**

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Size.</b>                   | 0.2 linear ft.   |
| <b>Geographic locations.</b>   | Louisiana; Mississippi; Camp Douglas, Illinois   |
| <b>Inclusive dates.</b>        | 1829-1921  |
| <b>Language.</b>               | English  |
| <b>Summary.</b>                | Papers consist mainly of correspondence between members of the Wall family, primarily Mary Winans Wall and Wesley Wall, dating from 1829-1921. |
| <b>Restrictions on access.</b> | None.  |
| <b>Related collections.</b>    | None.  |
| <b>Copyright.</b>              | For those materials not in the public domain, copyright is retained by the descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. Copyright law.  |
| <b>Citation.</b>               | Wall Family Papers, Mss. 5243, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.                             |
| <b>Stack locations.</b>        | V:47   |

**BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE**

Mary Susannah Winans Wall was born in August 1816 in Wilkinson County, Mississippi. She was the daughter of Martha DuBose and William Winans, a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church and founder of one of the earliest such congregations in Louisiana. On January 15, 1834, she married Isaac Wall. Isaac, born in July 1798, was educated in his home state of New Jersey before moving to Mississippi, and then Louisiana, where he worked as a carpenter and architect. He helped design the auditorium of Centenary College in Jackson, Louisiana in the 1840s, as well as portions of the East Feliciana Parish Courthouse and Lawyers' Row, in Clinton. He also built the family home in Clinton, and served as a preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Mary Wall worked as an educator, serving as principal at the Clinton Female Seminary, which was incorporated on March 18, 1861, and also served for several years as a public school for local children. Mary continued this work after her husband's death in 1872. She died on February 28, 1897.

Mary and Isaac Wall had nine children: Sarah Culbertson, William Winans, Benjamin Drake, Ira Bowman, Wesley Winans, Martha DuBose, Mary Eliza, Isaac Dickson, and Francis Richardson. The eldest, Sarah Culbertson Wall (born February 28, 1835), married Judge William F. Kernan, who served on the District Court and Circuit Court of Appeals in Louisiana. Together they had six children: Thomas, William, Mary, Sarah (Darling), Benjamin, and Elizabeth. Sarah died on December 17, 1891. The two eldest sons of Mary and Isaac, William Winans Wall (born 1837) and Benjamin Drake Wall (born 1840), both served in Louisiana's Crescent Regiment and were killed during the Civil War; the latter at the Battle of Mansfield in April 1864.

Two other sons, Ira Bowman Wall (born January 1843) and Wesley Winans Wall (born November 1846), were members of the 19<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry during the Civil War. Ira (called Bow) married Lizzie Embree on October 3, 1866 and worked as a planter on his in-laws' land in Clinton, called "Embree Vale." Their children included Joseph, Bowman, Isaac, and Sallie Kernan. Bow died November 30, 1928. Wesley was captured on September 20, 1863 at the Battle of Chickamauga in Georgia, and was a prisoner of war at Camp Douglas in Illinois through April of 1865. After the Civil War, he worked in a variety of jobs, including as a telegraph operator and hotel keeper, at locations throughout Mississippi and Louisiana, such as Biloxi, Lafayette, and Cheneyville. He married Rebecca Burr in 1877, and they had at least two children, Benjamin and Mary, born in 1880 and 1885. Wesley died October 19, 1922 in Cheneyville, La.

Mary and Isaac Wall also had two daughters: Mary Eliza Wall, who died at the age of 13, and Martha Dubose Wall, called Mattie (born 1849). Mattie married Douglas Embree and together they had three children, Mattie, Felix, and Francis. The family lived at Woodville, Louisiana and Meridian, Mississippi, as well as other locations. Mattie died in 1923.

The two youngest children of Mary and Isaac were Isaac Dickson Wall, called Ike (born May 17, 1856), and Francis Richardson Wall, called Frank (born 1860). Ike was a graduate of Centenary College at Jackson, Louisiana, where he taught after graduation. He served as a clergyman in the Methodist Episcopal Church, before leaving that position in 1882 and studying law under his brother-in-law, William F. Kernan. He eventually moved to Baton Rouge and opened a practice with his nephew, Thomas Kernan. Ike married Maria Beavin on January 6, 1892. Frank was a graduate of the United States Naval Academy. He became a lawyer and was a member of the editorial staff of the *Oregonian* in Portland, Oregon. A lieutenant in the Navy, he served in the Philippines during the Spanish-American war, and died in San Francisco in 1918.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The Wall family papers consist almost entirely of personal correspondence between family members and are arranged chronologically. There are 54 letters, as well as several letter fragments. In addition to the correspondence, there is a school merit certificate for Mary Eliza Wall (circa 1850s) signed by her mother as her teacher, an essay written by Wesley Wall titled "A Good Cause Makes a Stout Heart," dated November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1865, and a legal document from probate court in Wilkinson County, Mississippi, dated March 1855, certifying that Isaac Wall is licensed to officiate for marriages.

Much of the correspondence relates to the Wall family's experiences during the Civil War, including the deaths of three family members, as well as the long imprisonment of Wesley Wall at Camp Douglas in Chicago. Also evident in the letters is Mary Wall's commitment to education and religion. Most of the correspondence is written either to or from Mary or her son, Wesley.

The earliest letters were written to Mary Wall by friends and family, and discuss personal news, mutual friends, and daily life. These include a letter from a cousin in Centreville, Mississippi (June 3, 1829), and a letter from William Hezekiah Nathaniel Magruder, while he was a student at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut (September 1, 1833). Magruder, who would go on to found the Magruder Collegiate Institute in Baton Rouge, describes attending prayer services with "Doctor Fisk," presumed to be Wilbur Fisk, the first president of Wesleyan. In another letter, written to Wesley by his uncle, Wesley Winans, the older relative debates the best educational options, mentioning the girls' school in Clinton run by Wesley's mother and offering to help pay for tuition expenses elsewhere (October 6, 1859).

A letter from Benjamin Wall to his younger brother, Wesley, addresses the outcome of the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln as President, and possible actions that the southern states might take as a result, including secession and economic measures involving the cotton trade (November 18, 1860). Other correspondence from the Civil War period consists of 17 letters written to Wesley by his mother, Mary, while he was imprisoned at Camp Douglas between October 23, 1863 and April 15, 1865. In many of these letters Mary implores her son to pray, read the Bible, practice his "careless" handwriting, and always strive to improve himself and others. She also shares news of the family, including the deaths of his brother and uncle. There is only one letter from Wesley during this time, in which he indicates that he has been writing to Mary every three weeks, and that his letters must not be getting through to the family (October 5, 1864).

Mary also wrote letters to military leaders, including the commander at Camp Douglas, asking that Wesley be released to the care of two uncles living in the North (February 14, 1864), and to General [Philip] Cooke, commander at Baton Rouge, seeking permission to cross Union lines and the Mississippi River to visit her son and other family members (circa December 1863). In addition to these letters, there is a telegram regarding son Ben's injuries (May 9, 1862), and correspondence from other friends and family containing news such as the death of Mary's brother, Wesley Winans, who was killed at

Missionary Ridge in 1863. Mary briefly describes life in Clinton during the war as “gay,” despite the “grim times” (May 1, 1864). She also mentions her fair treatment by Union soldiers, which she believes was due to her earlier care for their wounded men (September 13, 1864).

Later letters were written between 1870 and 1921, with the primary correspondents still being Wesley and, prior to her death, Mary Wall. One exception is a letter from Isaac Dickson Wall (Ike) addressed to his brother-in-law Judge William Kernan, in which he asks for counsel on leaving the Methodist ministry, saying that he disagrees with some of its teachings (September 21, 1882).

Other correspondents include a cousin looking for a teaching job for her daughter (July 15, 1896), letters from Wesley to his mother and niece while living in different cities for his telegraph job, and a letter from Mary to granddaughter Mattie commenting on the quality of her writing (August 15, 1890). Many of these letters discuss grandchildren and other extended family members. A letter from Ira Bowman Wall (Bow) to Wesley talks about the death of their mother, Mary (March 8, 1897) and, in one of the latest dated letters, Bow discusses seeing Ike on a visit to Baton Rouge, where he attended a reunion with surviving members of their 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

**INDEX TERMS**

**Camp Douglas (Ill.)**  
**Clinton (La.)--History--19<sup>th</sup> century.**  
**Confederate States of America. Army. Louisiana Infantry Regiment, 19<sup>th</sup>.**  
**Education—Louisiana—Clinton.**  
**Girls' schools—Louisiana—Clinton.**  
**Kernan, W. F. (William Fergus), 1892-  
Letters (correspondence)**  
**Magruder, W. H. N. (William H. N.), 1815-1899.**  
**Methodist Episcopal Church.**  
**Presidents—United States—Election—1860.**  
**Secession—Southern States.**  
**United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865—Prisoners and prisons.**  
**Wall, Mary Winans, 1816-1897.**  
**Wall, Wesley, 1846-1922.**  
**Wesleyan University (Middletown, Conn.)**



CONTAINER LIST

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| <u>Location</u> | <u>Box</u> | <u>Folders</u> | <u>Contents with dates</u> |
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|                 |            | 3              | 1861-Apr 1864              |
|                 |            | 4              | May 1864-1865              |
|                 |            | 5              | 1870-1887                  |
|                 |            | 6              | 1888-1897                  |
|                 |            | 7              | 1904-1921, undated         |