CHARLES AND LUCY HILLIARD MCVEA PAPERS
Mss. 5159

Inventory

Compiled by
Luana Henderson

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

2014
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### SUMMARY

**Size.**  
0.75 linear ft.

**Geographic locations.**  
Louisiana.

**Inclusive dates.**  

**Bulk dates.**  
1866-1875.

**Language.**  
English.

**Summary.**  
The collection is comprised of correspondence and genealogy of the McVea and Hilliard families of Louisiana. Family letters reflect social life, daily activities and the economic environment in Louisiana after the Civil War. Letters also relate to the legal career of Charles McVea.

**Restrictions on access.**  
If microfilm is available, photocopies must be made from microfilm.

**Related collection**  

**Copyright.**  
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**Citation.**  
Charles and Lucy Hilliard McVea Papers, Mss. 5129, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.

**Stack locations.**  
UU:212
BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Charles McVea was born at Bayou Sara, Louisiana, on March 4, 1832. He was the son of John McVea (1798-1831) and Ellen Burress McVea (1802-1874), natives of Ireland. John McVea immigrated with his wife and young son, John (1820-1876), to Bayou Sara in 1820, where he died in 1832, shortly after the birth of his second son, Charles. Ellen Burress McVea remarried two years later to Thomas Kernan. Charles attended Centenary College at Shreveport, La., and then went on to study law in Clinton, where he went into partnership with Eugene Hunter. Eugene Hunter was a close family friend of the Hilliard family of New Iberia. In 1876, Charles was elected to the 16th District Court. In 1880, the Louisiana Legislature elected him to the Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit. He was also a delegate to the 1872 National Democratic Convention in Baltimore. Charles McVea died October 4, 1886.

Lucy Hilliard was born June 22, 1843 to Dr. Robert Carter Hilliard and Mary Walker Hilliard of Brunswick County, Virginia. In 1848, Dr. Hilliard moved his family to Louisiana where he established a successful medical practice in New Iberia. Lucy had several siblings, among them were John Tunstall (1841-1862), Edmond Thorne (1849-1892), Audubon (1854-1892), Henry Peebles (1859-1945), and May (1864-1945). The family spent the Civil War years in Texas, returning to Louisiana at the end of the war. Lucy met Charles McVea in the spring of 1866 while visiting a close family friend, Colonel Eugene Hunter. Charles courted her during the summer, and they married December 4, 1866 in New Iberia, Louisiana. The couple had three children who survived into adulthood, Charles (1869-1920), William Walker (1871-1928) and Mary Virginia (1872-1955). Lucy died in 1875 at the age of 32 years, most probably from tuberculosis.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection is comprised of correspondence and genealogical material on the McVea and Hilliard families of Louisiana. Most of the letters were exchanged between Charles McVea and Lucy Hilliard McVea from 1866 until 1875. Letters offer insight into family relationships, daily activities and social life in Louisiana after the Civil War, as well as McVea's work as lawyer. Correspondence also reflects the difficulty in coping with change after the war. Topics include personal and social activities, social events, and employing servants. Correspondents also discuss health and disease, financial problems, farming, and the weather. Charles remarks on the mental state of Clement Claiborne Clay, a former Confederate senator who was imprisoned for a year after the Civil War (July 23, 1869). Lucy's brother, Edmond T. Hilliard, writes from Fort Griffin, Texas, that African American soldiers make up the cavalry and former Confederate soldiers serve in the U.S. Army. He also mentions seeing the remnants of the Tonkawa Indian tribe (Aug. 17, 1873). Genealogical material contains a photocopy of The Arch of the Rainbow, Letters of Charles and Lucy McVea 1866-1875, by Bena McVea Chambliss (1995), along with partial drafts of the work (1994, undated). Material also includes photographs, genealogy notes and notebook on the McVea and Hilliard families. Photographs are copy prints of original portraits of Lucy Hilliard McVea (circa 1872-1875), Charles McVea (circa 1870-1886) and unidentified individuals (circa 1840-circa 1855). There is also a cabinet photograph of Mary Rebecca Walker (1898).
LIST OF SERIES

Series I. Correspondence, 1865-1880.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I. Correspondence, 1865-1880.

Family letters comprise this series, with most letters exchanged between Charles McVea and Lucy Hilliard McVea. Letters offer insight into family relationships, daily activities and social life in Louisiana after the Civil War, as well as Charles McVea’s profession as a lawyer. They also reflect the difficulty white Southerners had in coping with changes in lifestyle after the war. Correspondents discuss news of family and friends, health and illnesses, financial problems, shortages, travel conditions, and the difficulty in finding competent servants. Letters discuss social events, visits with family and friends, the weather and its impact on travel, health and farming. Several letters report on the births and deaths that occurred amongst family members, friends and acquaintances.

Other topics include Lucy’s letter of January 1865, which provides a perspective on the last days of the Civil War. The letters of 1866 relate to the progression of Charles and Lucy’s courtship and their wedding plans. Letters written in August 1867 report on a yellow fever epidemic, which claimed the life of Lucy’s father, along with hundreds of victims along the Gulf Coast states. Cousin Lula also reports of cases in Mississippi (Nov. 13, 1867). Charles describes a trip to New York (Aug. 1869), and he remarks on the mental state of Clement Claiborne Clay, a former Confederate senator who was imprisoned for a year after the Civil War (July 23, 1869).

In his letters, Charles often comments on his court cases, and remarks that the Louisiana courts are in confusion because of legislative changes made to them (Feb. 15, 1871). He describes his arrival at the National Democratic Convention in Baltimore and a visit to Washington D. C. (July 1872). Letters of 1873 refer to Lucy’s health, as well as reporting on the presence of whooping cough and cholera in Clinton (July 1873). Lucy’s brother, Edmond Thorne Hilliard, writes from Fort Griffin, Texas, that the cavalry is made up of African American soldiers, and he mentions seeing what is left of the Tonkawa Indian tribe, and he expresses surprise to see former Confederate soldiers serving in the U.S. Army (Aug. 17, 1873). The letters written in 1874 and 1875 focus more on Lucy’s illness and on the economic difficulties. The few letters after the death of Lucy relate to social and personal activities (1876-1880).


This series contains of a photocopy of *The Arch of the Rainbow, Letters of Charles and Lucy McVea 1866-1875*, by Bena McVea Chambliss (1995), along with partial drafts of the work (1994, undated). This work is comprised of transcriptions of the letters and family history related to the letters. Material also contains photographs, notes, and a notebook on the genealogy of the McVea and Hilliard families. Photographs consist of copy prints made of painted and photographed portraits originally produced circa 1840-circa 1855 and the circa 1872-before 1886. Identified individuals include Lucy Hilliard McVea (circa 1872-1875), Charles McVea (circa 1870-1886) and Mary Rebecca Walker
(1898). Genealogy also includes a letter with genealogy notes (undated), and letters that accompany a draft of the introduction (March 1, 1994) and a personal note (July 1998) on the title page of *The Arch of the Rainbow* ...
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