
Guide to the Alexander Family Papers, 1818-1956

Collection number: BANC MSS P-N 105 FILM

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Collection Summary

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Abstract: Include papers of William P. Alexander, pioneer missionary to the Sandwich Islands (letters and journals); letters written by his wife, Mary Ann (McKinney) Alexander; and papers of their son William DeWitt Alexander, including letters from Hiram Bingham, James Dwight Dana, George Davidson, Nathaniel Bright Emerson, Chester S. Lyman, Susan Lincoln Tolman Mills, William E. Safford, Cyrus Thomas, etc.

Languages Represented: English

Access

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Biographical Sketch

Both William Patterson Alexander (1805-1884) and Dwight Baldwin (1798-1886) were pioneer missionaries to the Sandwich Islands. In December, 1830, Dr. Baldwin, having just completed his medical studies at Harvard, married Charlotte Fowler and set sail with three other bridal, missionary couples aboard a whaler from New Bedford, Massachusetts (The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had recently decreed that only missionaries accompanied by their wives should be sent out.). In November 1831, William P. Alexander and his bride of less than a month, Mary Ann McKinney, also sailed from New Bedford on a whaler, in company with eight other missionary couples. In each case bride and bridegroom were practically strangers to each other, for neither couple had even met each other until a few weeks before embarking together, not only on a long and perilous journey, but upon a life-long association in strange and savage lands far from family and friends. However, both of the marriages turned out to be singularly happy, and the families, united by their mutual labors and also by marriages of their children, unusually close-knit and harmonious.

Dr. Baldwin was chiefly associated with Lahaina on the island of Maui; William P. Alexander with Waioli (Kauai), Wailuku and Lahainaluna (also on Maui) and with the Marquessas, to which he went several times. Both couples spent the rest of their lives in the Islands and contributed much to the growth and culture of the communities in which they lived and worked.

The eldest Alexander son, William De Witt, and eldest Baldwin daughter, Abigail Charlotte (both born in 1833) were married in 1860. Both young people had been sent to the States for schooling. William De Witt Alexander graduated from Yale in 1855, and after various teaching positions in the East and Middle West, returned to become Professor of Greek, and later President, of the famous Punahu School, Honolulu. Abigail Baldwin had attended Mt. Holyoke Seminary, much favored by the daughters of the Islands' missionary families. Yale and Williams College were favorites for many of the Island youths, particularly Baldwin and Alexander sons. Both families have been closely associated with the Punahu School; children of several generations have been pupils and a number have returned to teach there.

Yet another marriage linked the Baldwin and Alexander families -Emily Alexander married Henry Perrine Baldwin in 1870. The sons and daughters of both families, at least in the earliest generation, tended to marry within the fold of the missionary families. Most remained in the Islands but some came to the States, particularly to California. Some became teachers and clergymen; others associated with the raising of cane and pineapples or with the banking and mercantile life of the Islands, while still others entered political life.

William De Witt Alexander (1833-1913), in addition to his pedagogical career, was largely responsible for the Coast and Geodetic surveys of the Islands and was appointed Surveyor General of the Republic. He is also noted for his publications on the linguistics and history of the Hawaiian Islands. Yale granted him an honorary degree in 1903. He had previously served as one of the Islands' Commissioners to the United States to work out problems of annexation.

James McKinney Alexander (1835-1911) graduated from Williams College and for some time managed the family lands in the Islands. Although he had a long and successful pastorate in East Oakland, California, he retained a scientific and practical interest in agriculture.

These papers of the Alexander and Baldwin families are only part of the family archive assembled by Miss Mary Charlotte (daughter of William De Witt and Abigail) Alexander for the biographies she published of her pioneer grandfathers and for the history of Punahu School which she prepared with Charlotte Peabody Dodge. Most of the whole collection is now in the safe-keeping of The Hawaiian Mission Children's Society (more popularly known as The Cousins' Society) in Honolulu. Not only are the details of family life recorded -the trials and hardships of the missionary pioneers, the experiences of the children in pursuit of their education, their life in various Island communities (including the administration of Punahu School) -but interesting glimpses of the political life of the Islands are revealed. Unfortunately, although there are later letters to Miss Alexander from her brother, Arthur Chambers Alexander, there are none for the period covering World Wars I and II.

Scope and Content

Correspondence and Papers of William Patterson Alexander (1805-1884) and Dwight Baldwin (1798-1886), pioneer missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands, and of their descendants. A few early Alexander family letters, 1818-1849, included. Much of the correspondence is that of William DeWitt Alexander (1833-1913) and of his wife, Abigail Charlotte (Baldwin) Alexander.

Scope and Content

From the estate of Mary Charlotte Alexander and lent for filming, 1961-1963, by DeWitt Alexander.

Originals now in the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library, Honolulu.

I. Early Alexander Family Correspondence

reel 1

Miscellaneous letters, 1818-1849, from various members of the family of William Patterson Alexander.

Scope and Content Note

Letters from his brothers, Thomas and Samuel R. Alexander, included. A number addressed to their mother.

II. Miscellaneous papers of William Patterson Alexander

reel 1

Dedications to religious life, 1825-1829

Physical Description: (copy)

Journals and notes, 1831-1832

Physical Description: (originals and copies)

Notes on Washington Islands, 1834

Extracts, 1836-1839, from *Station Reports* to American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

Physical Description: (copy)

His copy of report from Singapore, May 1838, to the Board, sent by James F. Dockinson and Joseph S. Travelli. Lease, 1841, from Kamehameha IV, King of Hawaii, for land at Waioli, Kauai

Physical Description: (copy)

Travel notes in U.S., 1859

Golden Wedding, Oct. 28, 1881

Scope and Content Note

Invitation and poems by son, James McKinney Alexander.

III. Letters, 1831-1872, of William Patterson Alexander to his wife, Mary Ann (McKinney) Alexander

reel 1

General

IV. Letters (and copies of letters) 1832-1852, of William Patterson Alexander to various persons

reel 1

General

V. Letters, 1843-1868, of William Patterson Alexander to Dwight Baldwin

reel 1

General

VI. Letters, 1851-1884, of William Patterson Alexander to his sons

reel 1

General

Scope and Content Note

Mainly letters to William DeWitt Alexander

VII. Letters to William Patterson Alexander from various persons

reel 1

George E. Beckwith
Titus Coan
Richard Armstrong
Charles H. Wetmore

VIII. Letters, 1834-1888, of Mary Ann (McKinney) Alexander (1810-1888) to her husband, members of her family and to Maria P. Chamberlin, and letter, 1835, from her nephew, Alexander Grayden

VIII. Letters, 1834-1888, of Mary Ann (McKinney) Alexander (1810-1888) to her husband, members of her family and to Maria P. Chamberlin, and letter, 1835, from her nephew, Alexander Grayden

reel 2

General

IX. Baldwin Family Correspondence and Papers

reel 2

General

Additional Note

[Letters from Abigail Charlotte (Baldwin) Alexander to her parents are with her correspondence]

Scope and Content Note

A few letters, 1844-1877, from Dwight Baldwin (1798-1886) to his wife, son, David Dwight, daughter, Abigail, and her husband, William DeWitt Alexander; letters, ca. 1863-1867, from Charlotte (Fowler) Baldwin (1805-1873) to her daughter, Abigail; letters, 1847-1887, from David Dwight Baldwin to his sister and her husband, W. D. Alexander; letter, 1888, from Henry Perrine Baldwin to his brother-in-law, W. D. Alexander; letter, 1872, from Erdman Baldwin to his cousin, William Douglas Alexander.

With these: extracts, 1837-1842, from reports of Dwight Baldwin to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions on the Lahaina Station; copies of letters, 1838-1840, to Lorenzo and Mrs. Lyons; letter to Sophronia (Baldwin) Robinson, 1840, from Croydon Benton; letters, 1853, from Richard Armstrong to Dwight Baldwin.

X. Letters, 1850-1911, of William De Witt Alexander (1833-1913) to various persons

reel 2

General

Additional Note

Mainly to his parents and his brothers and sisters.

XI. Courtship correspondence of William De Witt Alexander and Abigail Charlotte Baldwin, Dec. 1858-July 1860

reel 2

General

Additional Note

(Letters exchanged after marriage are filed with their individual papers)

XII. Letters, 1865-1910, of William De Witt Alexander to his wife

reel 3

General

Additional Note

Film of portion of letter, Aug. 5, 1867, describing visit to Yosemite Valley, (lent previously) added.

XIII. Letters, 1875-1912, of William De Witt Alexander to his children

reel 3

General

Scope and Content Note

Mainly to his sons, William Douglas and Henry E. M. Alexander and to his daughter, Mary Charlotte Alexander.

XIV. Letters, 1846-1912, to William De Witt Alexander from various persons

reel 3

Claudius B. Armstrong
Richard Armstrong
Samuel Chapman Armstrong (1839-1893)
William Nevins Armstrong
Hiram Bingham (1831-1908)
Charles Reed Bishop
William Fremont Blackman (1855-1932)
E. C. Bond
Isaac H. Brayton (d. 1869)
Lyman D. Brewster
Elmer E. Brown
Alfred L. Castle
Warren Chamberlain
Aaron Lucius Chapin (1817-1892)
Calvin G. Child
Linus M. Child
Nathaniel George Clark (1825-)
J. Edward Clarke
Titus Munson Coan (1836-1921)
Henry N. Cobb
James Dwight Dana (1813-1895)
George Davidson (1825-1911)
William Radcliffe De Witt (1792-1867)
Charles H. Dickey
Paul H. Dike
Daniel Dole
William Drake
Joseph S. Emerson
Nathaniel Bright Emerson (1835-1915)
Oliver P. Emerson
M. B. Ewing
Mary (Dillingham) Frear
Graham D. Gilman

Scope and Content Note

(Letter, ca. 1904, encloses portion of a family letter, 1843, concerning British repudiation of seizure of the Sandwich Islands by Lord George Paulet)

Edward Gorton
Arthur Floyd Griffiths
William Mason Grosvenor (1835-1900)
H. B. Guppy
Harvey Rexford Hitchcock (Jr.)
Frank A. Hosmer
Albert Francis Judd
H. W. Laws
Chester Smith Lyman (1814-1890)
Curtis J. Lyons
Susan Lincoln (Tolman) Mills (1826-1912)
John Hipple Mitchell (1825-1905)
John A. Moore
William B. Oleson
I. D. Paxton
Henry Byron Phillips
Samuel U. Pond

Edward G. Porter
William Edwin Safford (1859-1926)
S. Percy Smith
A. C. Standart
E. D. Tenney
Cyrus Thomas (1825-1910)
James Walker
Walter E. Wall
A. B. Weymouth
William R. Woodbridge

XV: Miscellany of William De Witt Alexander (1833-1913)

a. Miscellaneous papers of William De Witt Alexander, 1847-1912

reel 4

General

Scope and Content Note

Include copies of journals, 1847-1850; poems, essays and miscellaneous writings; accounts of Silver and Golden Wedding celebrations; commission as Surveyor General, Republic of Hawaii; various personal papers.

Two unidentified items: Article on teaching English to natives [ca. 1856?] and Reminiscences of Ecuador, with the papers.

b. Newspaper clippings from papers of William De Witt Alexander

reel 4

General

c. Obituary and biographical material for William De Witt Alexander and Abigail Charlotte (Baldwin) Alexander

reel 4

General

XVI. Miscellaneous correspondence and papers of Abigail Charlotte (Baldwin) Alexander, 1841-1883

reel 4

General

Scope and Content Note

Include letters from Mary E. Green, members of the Hawley and Sterling families in Connecticut, Anna Eliza (Clark) Gulick, Melissa P. Dodge, Maria Jane (Chamberlain Forbes) and others.

Miscellaneous papers include a copy of her Journal, July-Nov. 1850, describing visit to island of Hawaii; schedule of studies outlined by their father for her and her brother, David Dwight Baldwin, on their voyage around Cape Horn on the barque, Croton, 1850; various note-books and compositions while attending Mt. Holyoke Seminary; later writings; drafts of petitions, 1883, to the Board of Directors, Punahou School, in behalf of William L. Jones.

XVII. Letters, 1844-1879, of Abigail Charlotte (Baldwin) Alexander (1833-1913) to her parents

reel 4

General

Scope and Content Note

A letter, July 28, 1868, to her mother-in-law, Mary Ann (McKinney) Alexander, and draft of letter, 1903, to a friend, included.

XVIII. Letters, Nov. 1860-1903, of Abigail Charlotte (Baldwin) Alexander to her husband, William De Witt Alexander

reel 4

General

XIX. Letters, 1871-1909, of Abigail Charlotte (Baldwin) Alexander (1833-1913) to her children

reel 5

General

XX. Letters, 1850-1903, of James McKinney Alexander (1835-1911) to his family

reel 6

General

Scope and Content Note

Mainly to his parents and to his brother, William De Witt Alexander. A letter, 1882, from his wife, Mary E. (Webster) Alexander to her sister-in-law, Abigail, included.

With these: a college essay, ca. 1855, and a letter from L. S., ca. 1847.

XXI. Letter, 1852, of Henry Martin Alexander to his brother, William De Witt Alexander

reel 6

General

XXII. Letters, 1862-1903, of Samuel Thomas Alexander (1836-1904) to members of his family

reel 6

General

Scope and Content Note

To his brother, William De Witt Alexander, and niece, Mary Charlotte Alexander.

With copy of a portion of letter from his daughter, Annie, concerning ill-fated trip with her father in Africa, 1904.

XXIII: a. Letters, 1868-1873, of Emily Whitney (Alexander) Baldwin to her brother, William De Witt Alexander and his wife

reel 6

General

XXIII: b. Letters, 1873, from Mary Jane Alexander (1840-) and her sister, Ellen Charlotte Alexander (1852-1926) to their parents

reel 6

General

XXIV. Letters, 1870-1906, of William Douglas Alexander to his family

reel 6

General

Scope and Content Note

Mainly to his mother, Abigail Charlotte (Baldwin) Alexander.

XXV. Letters, 1878-1952, of Arthur Chambers Alexander to his family

reel 6

General

Scope and Content Note

Mainly to his brother, William Douglas Alexander, and sister, Mary Charlotte Alexander. Some of the earlier ones have added notes by their mother.

XXVI. Letters, 1881-1890, of Henry E. M. Alexander (1868-1900) to his parents

reel 6

General

XXVII. Correspondence, 1882-1956, of Mary Charlotte Alexander

reel 6

General

Scope and Content Note

Letters, 1882-1883, to her father, William De Witt Alexander; and letters, 1943, from Alexander cousins and 1956, from Ethel M. Damon.