

Guide to the Macdonald Family Papers

MS 950



compiled by Diane E. Kaplan and Nancy A. Robertson

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 950

CREATOR: Macdonald family

TITLE: Macdonald family papers

DATES: 1808-1922

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2 linear feet (5 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Principal figures in the papers are James Macdonald, his wife, Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald, and two of their six children: James Allen and Eliza. Included in the papers are family correspondence, household and travel bills and receipts, as well as the business papers of the Sanford Hall Institution, a private mental hospital operated by the family. The bulk of the papers consists of personal letters to Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald and records of the Sanford Hall Institution (1845-1915).

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Macdonald Family Papers (MS 950). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

JAMES MACDONALD

James Macdonald (born at White Plains, N. Y.; died in 1850, at Flushing, N. Y.) was a physician, living at New York City. He was of Scotch ancestry. Eliza Harris (Miller) Macdonald (born March 16, 1814, at New York City; died July 25, 1890, at Flushing, N. Y.) was of an old New York family.

Macdonald served as a private and a corporal in the 7th and 37th Regiments of New York Volunteer Infantry in 1862 and until the fall of 1863. He prepared for college at a private school in New York City. He graduated from Columbia College in 1863 and entered Sheff. in September of the same year, taking the course in assaying and mining.

He was married, at New York City, on March 1, 1892, to Miss Cara Crooke, sister of his classmate Robert Livingston Crooke and daughter of Philip Schuyler Crooke, a lawyer of Flatbush, N. Y. They have one daughter: Flora, born December 30, 1892, at Flushing, N. Y.

Macdonald is vice president of the United Verde Copper Company and of sundry other companies, but has retired from active business. He is a Democrat of the old school and a member of several New York clubs, among them the Players, University and Metropolitan. He attends the Protestant Episcopal church.

(Taken from the Sheffield Scientific School Class Of 1866 Record.)

JAMES ALLAN MACDONALD

James Allan Macdonald was born at New York City, on March 16, 1844. He is a son of James Macdonald and Eliza Harris (Miller) Macdonald, and has one brother, J. Archibald (Columbia 1868), and four sisters, Flora (Mrs. Barstow), Margaret (Mrs. Mitchell), Anne (Mrs. Miller), and Eliza.

For charts outlining the genealogical relations of the MacDonald, Miller, and Littell families, please consult the [Genealogical Charts](#).

Scope and Contents

The Macdonald Family Papers consist of both the personal papers of the families of Dr. James Macdonald and his wife Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald, and the papers of the family business, the Sanford Hall Institution, a private mental hospital. James Allen Macdonald, one of six children of James and Eliza Macdonald, was an early student in the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University.

James Macdonald's father, Dr. Archibald Macdonald, had come to the American colonies from Scotland while still a child and had served in the British army as a surgeon during the Revolutionary War. Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald (b. 1814) was from an old New York family.

James Macdonald (b. 1803), like his father, became a physician. He graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York in 1824. In the years following he specialized in the care of individuals with mental disorders. In 1831 with a commission from the Governors of the New York Hospital he traveled extensively in Europe, visiting continental mental institutions and noting their improvements in the care and treatment of their patients. On his return he was appointed resident physician and superintendent of Bloomingdale Asylum in New York. He remained with this institution until the late 1830s when, with his brother Allan, Macdonald became proprietor of a private mental institution on Murray Hill in New York City. In 1844 James and Allan purchased the richly appointed private residence of Nathan Sanford in Flushing, New York, and in 1845 transferred their patients to the new Sanford Hall Institution. James served as the resident physician and Allan tended to the financial and administrative matters.

When Dr. James Macdonald died suddenly in 1849 he left the management of the Sanford Hall Institution to his wife and brother. Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald served as administratrix of her husband's estate, and some of the papers in the Macdonald Family Papers are records kept by Eliza during the more than seven years of estate settlement proceedings.

Sanford Hall remained a family business. From 1849 until 1854 Dr. Henry W. Bue¹ had served as resident physician, but when he left to become proprietor of Spring Hill Private Asylum in Litchfield, Connecticut, Eliza's son-in-law Dr. J. Whitney Barstow, husband of Flora Macdonald, took his place. He continued as resident physician until at least 1876. In 1887 Sanford Hall was incorporated and some of Eliza's children became stockholders. James Allen Macdonald, though trained in assaying and mining, became the president of the corporation and his sister Eliza became the secretary. The family business prospered, and Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald spent many of her later years in travel with her daughters in Europe and the United States. She died in 1890, but the family's interest in the Sanford Hall Institution continued into the twentieth century.

The Macdonald Family Papers span the years 1808-1922, but the bulk of the material consists of personal letters to Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald, and records of the Sanford Hall Institution, 1845-1915. The papers are divided into Personal Papers, which includes papers of several family members, and Business Papers, which includes correspondence, financial, and legal records of the Sanford Hall Institution. Since many family members were involved in the operation of Sanford Hall, the Personal Papers also contain, in correspondence and estate material, references to the family business.

Personal Papers are grouped by type, the largest quantity being Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald's correspondence, which is arranged alphabetically by author. Most of her correspondents are her children, brothers, and sisters writing news of themselves or other family members. Especially detailed are letters from Flora and J. Whitney Barstow and James Allan Macdonald. Letters from brother-in-law Allan Macdonald discuss the delayed settlement of James Macdonald's estate. Letters from friends discuss travel and generally reflect the life of well-to-do Americans after the Civil War. A number of letters from friends praise Eliza's generosity and kindness. She also received occasional letters from patients at Sanford Hall (Anne H. Titus; Henrietta Wetmore) and letters from Union soldiers during the Civil War (W. B. Churchill; Reuters Heywood; Lewis Hanlin). There are no letters from her husband James Macdonald.

Personal Papers also contains correspondence to other family members and friends. This correspondence is arranged alphabetically by recipient. Of particular interest are letters to James Macdonald from professional colleagues and letters to Allan Macdonald, which include early letters from James describing his difficulties meeting the expenses of medical school. Other types of material included as Personal Papers are bills and receipts, estate papers, a few photographs, and some miscellaneous memorabilia. The bills and receipts include statements of housekeeping expenses with lists of wages for servants and fees paid for professional services. There are also many hotel and restaurant receipts from Eliza's European travels.

The Business Papers for the Sanford Hall Institution consist, for the most part, of bills and receipts relative to the operation of the institution and other financial records showing income. Of particular interest are several folders of correspondence to Dr. J. Whitney Barstow from friends and relatives of the residents of Sanford Hall. The letters concern patient accounts, visitation privileges, and, in general, the well-being of patients.

Note: In the following list an asterisk next to a folder title for correspondence indicates that that folder contains ten or more items.

Collection Contents

Inventory, 1808-1922

2 linear feet (5 boxes)

Personal Papers

b. 1, f. 1	Bills and receipts: household	1843, 1860-1877, undated
b. 1, f. 2-4	Bills and receipts: travel	1871 March- Nov, October- Nov; 1875; undated
Correspondence to Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald		
b. 1, f. 5	A	
b. 1, f. 6	B	
b. 1, f. 7	Barstow, Flora (*)	1859-1868
b. 1, f. 8	Barstow, Flora (*)	1869-1882, undated
b. 1, f. 9-10	Barstow, J. Whitney (*)	1855, 1863-1875, undated
b. 1, f. 11	C	
b. 1, f. 12	D-G	
b. 1, f. 13	H	
b. 1, f. 14	Higginson, R.M. (*)	1873-1883, undated
b. 1, f. 15	J-K	
b. 1, f. 16	Ketchum, Margaret (*)	1852-1884, undated
b. 1, f. 17	L	
b. 2, f. 18	Littell, E. (*)	1852-1865
b. 2, f. 19	Littell, E. (*)	1866-1870
b. 2, f. 20	Littell, Margaret (*)	1864-1873, 1882
b. 2, f. 21	Littell, Susan G. (*)	1845, 1852-1883, undated
b. 2, f. 22	M	
b. 2, f. 23	Macdonald, Allan (*)	1854-1860, undated

Personal Papers > Correspondence to Eliza Harris Miller Macdonald (continued)

b. 2, f. 24	Macdonald, Annie (*)	1865-1868, undated
b. 2, f. 24	Macdonald, Bessie	1859-1884, undated
b. 2, f. 25-26	Macdonald, James Allan (*)	1860-1884
b. 2, f. 27	Macdonald, J. Archibald (*)	1870-1884
b. 2, f. 28	Macdonald, John M.	1849, 1854
b. 2, f. 28	Macdonald, Mary	1871-1875, 1887
b. 2, f. 29	Miller, Anicartha	1857, undated
b. 2, f. 29	Miller, Cicely	1866-1868, 1882
b. 2, f. 30	Miller, George (*)	1855-1866, 1872
b. 2, f. 30	Miller, Mary Esther (*)	1859, 1868-1873
b. 2, f. 31	Miller, Mary Esther (*)	1874-1883
b. 2, f. 32	Miller, Sidney G.	1861
b. 2, f. 32	Miller, Silvanus	1872-1874
b. 2, f. 33	Mitchell, Maggie (*)	1859-1869
b. 2, f. 34	Mitchell, Maggie	1871-1876
b. 2, f. 35	O-P	
b. 2, f. 36	Pryor, J.W.	1865-1866
b. 2, f. 36	Pryor, Katharine M. (*)	1865-1876, undated
b. 2, f. 37	R-T	
b. 2, f. 38	Rogers, Clara B.	1883
b. 2, f. 39	V-W	
b. 2, f. 40	Unidentified	1857-1865, undated
Correspondence to other family members and friends		
b. 3, f. 41	A-C	
b. 3, f. 42	Barstow, Flora	1857-1866, undated
b. 3, f. 42	Barstow, J. Whitney (*)	1862-1874
b. 3, f. 43	H	

Personal Papers > Correspondence to other family members and friends (continued)

b. 3, f. 44	Ketchum, Margaret	1862, 1874, undated
b. 3, f. 45	M	
b. 3, f. 46-47	Macdonald, Allan (*)	1818-1828, 1836- 1857, undated
b. 3, f. 46-47	Macdonald, Ann	1871-1872, undated
b. 3, f. 46-47	Macdonald, Flora	1818
b. 3, f. 48	Macdonald, James (*)	1830-1849, undated
b. 3, f. 48	Macdonald, James Allan	1858-1884
b. 3, f. 49	Macdonald, John M.	1836-1868
b. 3, f. 49	McLean, Mary	1854-1858
b. 3, f. 50	Miller, Anicartha	1832-1852, undated
b. 3, f. 50	Miller, Fanny	1860
b. 3, f. 50	Miller, George	1856
b. 3, f. 50	Miller, Mary Esther	1861
b. 3, f. 51	Miller, Silvanus, Sr.	1838
b. 3, f. 51	Mitchell, James	1819, 1830-1839
b. 3, f. 51	Mitchell, Margaret	1909
b. 3, f. 52	P	
b. 3, f. 53	Pryor, Kate	1861, 1865
b. 3, f. 53	Pryor, Kitty	1864
b. 3, f. 54	Tyler, Alice (*)	1886, 1890, undated
b. 3, f. 55	V-W	
b. 3, f. 56	Unidentified	1808, 1831-1883, 1927, undated
b. 3, f. 57	Estate material	1840-1853
b. 3, f. 58-60	Estate material	1854-1857, 1862-1886, 1913
b. 3, f. 61	Funeral invitations and newsclippings	1862-1866

Personal Papers (continued)

b. 4, f. 62	Genealogical material	1860-1863, undated
b. 4, f. 63	Photographs	undated
b. 4, f. 64	Poetry	1817, undated
b. 4, f. 65	Statements re: estate of Allan Macdonald	1842, 1862, undated
b. 4, f. 66-67	Miscellany	1848-1849, 1862-1891, 1922, undated
Business Papers: Sanford Hall Institution		
b. 4, f. 68-69	Bank checks and receipts	1909-1915
b. 4, f. 70-73	Bills and receipts	1856-1874, 1891-1894, 1905, 1912-1915
b. 4, f. 74	Correspondence re: supplies	1845, 1873
b. 4, f. 75	Correspondence re: residents	1867-1871
b. 4, f. 76	Correspondence re: residents	1872-1876, undated
b. 4, f. 77	Dividend checks and receipts	1864, 1893-1898, 1904-1911
b. 4, f. 78	Dividend checks and receipts	1912
b. 5, f. 79	Dividend checks and receipts	1913
b. 5, f. 80	Legal documents	1874-1915
b. 5, f. 81	Treasurer's statements and related correspondence	1894-1914

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Asylums -- New York (State)
Businessmen
Cost and standard of living
Families
Medicine
Mental health
Physicians
Psychiatric hospitals -- Records

Genres / Formats

Account books

Names

Barstow, Josiah Whitney, 1826-
Higginson, R. M.
Ketchum, Margaret
Littell, E.
Littell, Margaret
Macdonald, Eliza
Macdonald, Eliza Harris Miller, 1814-1890
Macdonald, James, 1803-1849
Miller, George
Miller, James Allen, 1844-
Miller, Mary Esther
Mitchell, Maggie
Pryor, Katharine M.
Tyler, Alice

Families

McDonald family