



US LNHT MC 116

Sidney Lanier papers

MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTION 116

1875-1886
0.5 linear feet (100 items)

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with processing assistance
by Maxwell Means
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SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection is primarily comprised of the letters of Sidney Lanier to Clare deGraffenreid, but also includes letters to and from Sidney's wife Mary Day Lanier, the poems of Sidney Lanier, and newspaper clippings referencing Sidney Lanier.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Sidney Lanier was a noted southern poet and composer, born in Macon Georgia on February 3rd 1842. He died at the age of 39 on September 7th 1881. He graduated from Oglethorpe University and very soon thereafter, Lanier voluntarily fought for the Confederacy as a member of the 2nd Battalion Infantry (Georgia), and the Signal Corps in the American Civil War. It is likely that Lanier contracted tuberculosis during his stay at a Union prison camp, and the complications from that disease would affect Lanier his entire life, up to and including his death.

After the war, Lanier first worked as a tutor and eventually a headmaster at an Alabama academy before returning home to Macon Georgia in 1867. He married his wife, Mary Day, that same year. In Macon, Lanier worked at his father's law firm, passing the bar

and staying at his father's firm for several years; in this time he largely wrote poetry in the voice of poor black and white sharecroppers in the reconstruction south. Late in 1873 Lanier accepted a position as lead flutist in the Peabody Orchestra, moving to Baltimore Maryland and leaving his family behind due to financial burdens. While primarily residing in Baltimore, Lanier wrote his more important poetical and musical works (for poetry "Corn," "The Symphony," "The Marshes of Glynn," and "Sunrise" and most notably "Black Birds" for music), and he would keep a home there in Baltimore until moving to the mountains of North Carolina near Lynn shortly before his death. In addition to his work at the Peabody Orchestra, Lanier composed poetry for the Centennial Cantata, and would eventually become a lecturer at John Hopkins University, publishing a single piece critical work: "The Science of English Verse."

After her husband's death, Mary Day Lanier compiled, edited, and published collections of Sidney's lectures, poems, and letters.

Clare deGraffenreid knew Sidney Lanier primarily through his wife, Mary Day. While she would not appear in Lanier's published letters until September 10th 1867, her connection to Sidney and Mary Day was strong enough to merit a position as an attendant in their wedding that December. As these collected letters show, Sidney Lanier and Clare deGraffenreid shared a close friendship that lasted until Lanier's death.

Born in Macon Georgia on May 19th 1849, deGraffenreid graduated with honors from Macon's Wesleyan College in 1865. Rather than giving her prepared valedictory essay at the commencement exercise, she instead gave a speech in the defense of the Confederacy, much to the chagrin of the occupying Union forces who had captured Macon just a few weeks prior.

In 1875, Clare deGraffenreid moved from her home in Macon to Washington D.C. and within the year was hired to a teaching position at Georgetown Seminary for Young Ladies, where she would teach until 1886 (roughly five years after Lanier's death). After teaching, deGraffenreid worked in the government, first in the U.S. patent office from 1886 to 1888, then as a special agent in the Department of Labor up until her 1906 retirement. Clare deGraffenreid then traveled abroad until returning home to Washington in 1910. Clare deGraffenreid died on April 26th 1921.

PROVENANCE

Acquired from Mrs. Ruth Rose Swacker of Finlay Ohio in 1962 and 1963.

CITATION

Please cite as follows:

Sidney Lanier papers, Manuscripts Collection 116, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118.

ACCESS POINTS

Poets, American -- 19th century.
Poets, American -- Southern States.
Authors, American -- 19th century.
Musicians -- Southern States.
American poetry -- Southern States.
Reconstruction (U.S. history, 1865-1877)
Musicians as authors.
Lanier, Sidney, 1842-1881.
Lanier, Mary Day.
deGraffenreid, Clare.
Southern States -- Intellectual life -- 19th century.

RELATED RESOURCES

Preserving the papers of southern writers, poets, and journalists is a special mission of the Tulane University Manuscripts Department. Among our holdings are:

Rouquette, Francois Dominique, manuscripts collection 508, 1850, n.d.

Louisiana poet, 16 items, including 4 Volumes

Saxon, Lyle, manuscripts collection 4, 1879-1946

Louisiana author, 3,389 items, including 10 volumes

Robert Southey to Robert Lovell, M 1105, April 5, 1794

Drafts of five unpublished poems; two may have been early versions of poems published later.

A larger collection of Sidney Lanier's work and letters can be found in the archives of Johns Hopkins University.

Citation for John Hopkins University collection:

Sidney Lanier Papers Ms. 7

Special Collections

Milton S. Eisenhower Library
Johns Hopkins University

For more information:

<http://ead.library.jhu.edu/ms007.xml>

INVENTORY

Folder 1: 1875-1876 Correspondence

1. Sidney Lanier to "My Too Sweet" (likely Clare deGraffenreid), 29 January 1875.
Lanier discusses his recent conversation with Mrs. Cushman, including his intention to include a dedication to her within the poem "Corn."
2. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, 30 November 1875.
Lanier apologizes to Clare that he cannot make a certain "invitation" then goes on to describe events in his life in Baltimore and some of his success as a poet.
3. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to "Dear Child" (likely Clare deGraffenreid), 8 January 1876.
Lanier first exhorts the recipient not to mention his invitation to the Centennial Commission and then mentions in passing his poem for the Cantata opening the Centennial Expansion.
4. Sidney Lanier, presumably Baltimore, Maryland, likely to Clare deGraffenreid, 18 January 1876.
In sweeping prose, Lanier compares the recipient to the particularly lovely day on which he composed the letter.
5. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to "My Dear Child" (likely Clare deGraffenreid), 8 February 1876.
Lanier, briefly mentioning a recent illness, begs his "Dear Child" to write him back and/or visit soon.
6. A.M. Roberts, Macon, Georgia, to Sidney Lanier, presumably Baltimore, Maryland, 12 February 1876.
Ms. Roberts, congratulates Lanier on his participation in writing the poetry for the Centennial Cantata, and informs him of her upcoming wedding.
7. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to unspecified (likely Clare deGraffenreid), "Monday Morning" (perhaps 14 February 1876 as the letter seems to discuss events transpiring after Clare deGraffenreid's birthday party on the day previous) Lanier describes generally the conversation he had on his walk home from a party on the previous night. He wishes the recipient a "violet for a valentine." Included is a leaf pressed within the letter.
8. Sidney Lanier, presumably Baltimore, Maryland, to unspecified (likely Clare deGraffenreid), "Saturday Morning" (roughly 26 February 1876 based on information in the letter)
Lanier writes about his sorrow over the death of his friend Charlotte Cushman, and how much the recipient's company would help alleviate his melancholy.
9. Sidney Lanier, presumably Baltimore, Maryland, to unspecified (likely Clair deGraffenreid), "Monday Night" (from content one might infer the date 28 February 1876)

- The letter does little more than explain another enclosed letter and poem (neither is included).
10. Sidney Lanier, presumably Baltimore, Maryland, to “dear Child” (likely Clare deGraffenreid), “Friday Morning” (probably March 1876 as it seems to comment on the poem in his last letter)
Lanier flirtatiously responds to the recipient (probably the recipient of the “Monday Night” letter and presumably Clare deGraffenreid) refuting her criticism of his diction.
 11. Sidney Lanier, West Chester, Pennsylvania, to Clare deGraffenreid, 7 October 1876.
Lanier apologizes to Clare that due to illness he will be unable to meet her in New York City, but asks if they could not meet some other time later in the year.
 12. Sidney Lanier, Philadelphia Pennsylvania, to Clare deGraffenreid, 24 November 1876.
Lanier voices his hope that Clare and he might be able to meet during Christmas vacation, and complains of a health ailment he characterizes as a “discomboboration of the lungs.”

Folder 2: 1877-1881 Correspondence

13. Sidney Lanier, Tampa, Florida, to unspecified (likely Clare deGraffenreid), 24 January 1877.
Lanier tells the recipient that the Florida air is improving his lung condition and that he will likely soon return to Baltimore.
14. Sidney Lanier, Macon, Georgia, to Clare deGraffenreid, 28 May 1877.
Lanier writes to tell Clare that he is heading north, first to Baltimore, but then over to Washington D.C. to conduct some business there. He says he feels much better, and hopes that he and Clare might meet together some time during his trip.
15. Sidney Lanier, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Clare deGraffenreid, 11 July 1877.
Lanier prefaces an attached poem, and includes a short “Eastern fable” concerning the copious and weighty love letters of a middle-eastern king.
16. Sidney Lanier to “Méchant Enfant” (likely Clare deGraffenreid), no date (the next letter mentions a “French project”, therefore this seems a likely place in order)
Lanier writes a letter in rudimentary French.
17. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to “dear Child” (likely Clare deGraffenreid), 25 November 1877.
Lanier writes of his plans to live in Baltimore, his inability to gain a government appointment, his return to the magazine industry, and the publication of several of his poems.
18. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, 11 May 1878.
Lanier apologizes to Clare for being unable to invite her over for Easter, but asks her to stay over the summer.
19. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, 5 October 1878.
Lanier informs Clare of a series of lectures on Shakespeare he plans to perform at the Peabody Institute. He also mentions his new address and plans to perhaps do another series of lectures in Washington. Included is an announcement from the Peabody Institute outlining Lanier’s lecture.

20. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, 8 November 1878. Lanier outlines at length the English Poetry course he proposed in Washington, dividing the course into Anglo Saxon, Middle English, and Modern English periods.
21. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, 12 November 1878. The letter appears to briefly preface an article from a circular, which was apparently originally included with the letter. Though the article is not included with the collection, the letter suggests that the article was about Lanier's coming lectures in Washington D.C.
22. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, 15 November 1878. Lanier discusses a change in the price and the time of his lectures, then reminds Clare of their meeting on the coming Thursday.
23. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, 27 November 1878. Lanier begins the letter by discussing the starting date of his lectures and segues into persuading Clare to spend her Christmas holidays in Lanier's newly furnished home.
24. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to "You dear little Soul" (likely Clare deGraffenreid), 14 January 1879.
In this very brief letter, Lanier thanks the recipient for her help in what was an apparently fruitless lecture project.
25. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, 3 July 1880. Lanier asks Clare to visit him in his ill and fevered state.
26. Sidney Lanier, presumably Baltimore, Maryland, to unspecified (likely Clare deGraffenreid), 20 December 1880.
Lanier thanks the recipient for a letter she sent last Thanksgiving. He apologizes that his health stops him from writing more, but says that his physician seems to think he'll survive the illness.
27. Invitation to the Commemoration of the late Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, Washington D.C., 20 October 1881. Envelope included.

Folder 3: 1886 Correspondence

28. Charles G. D. Roberts, Windsor, United States (maybe Vermont), to Mary Day Lanier, maybe New York, New York, 7 February 1886.
Mr. Roberts writes the widowed Mrs. Lanier extolling her husband's brilliance, expressing his condolences, and informing her that he will be giving a lecture in Halifax regarding some of Mr. Lanier's work. Roberts includes in the letter a handwritten poem dated 23 March 1885 entitled "On Reading the Poems of Sidney Lanier."
29. Mary Day Lanier, New York, New York, to Clare deGraffenreid, 18 May 1886.
In the first page of this two page letter, Mrs. Lanier warmly regards deGraffenreid and discusses the state of her own life and that of a couple mutual friends. In the second letter begun "Extra page – to be burned," Mary Day asks deGraffenreid for her aid in compiling which correspondences of Mr. Lanier are to be published and fondly but briefly mentions a gentleman named Harry. Included is a lock of hair dated 1882 with a note which seems to be in Mary Day Lanier's handwriting.

30. Mary Day Lanier, Pikesville, Maryland, to Clare deGraffenreid, Washington D.C., 22 June 1886.
Mrs. Lanier informs Clare of changes in her summer plans and asks deGraffenreid if she might be able to visit in the next couple weeks.
31. John B. Tabb, Ellicott City, Maryland, to "Dear Friends" (which ostensibly includes either Mary Day Lanier or Clare deGraffenreid as the letter has found its way into the collection), 9 February 1886.
This seems to be an incomplete letter from John B. Tabb, the bottom of which has been torn off abruptly ending a sentence beginning "I fear you..." The back of the card sized partial letter mentions Charles Roberts' fawning criticism of Lanier, intimating that his observations might have extra meaning for those who knew Lanier. Included with this letter are two handwritten poems by Tabb, "Pairing of Turtle-doves" and "To a Photograph" (the former of which is dated 1886 and is written on the same size and type of paper as the partial letter).

Folder 4: Documents with No Dates

32. A note written on what appears to be Sidney Lanier's calling card signed with Sidney Lanier's initials.
Note asks recipient to visit him after church.
33. Sidney Lanier, Baltimore, Maryland, to "Dear Child" (probably Clare deGraffenreid), Thursday.
Lanier informs his recipient that he has reserved seats for them on the next night. Included is the pressed leaf which stains the paper.
34. A note to an unknown recipient (perhaps a letter) from Sidney Lanier.
Note asks if the recipient might be able to spend the afternoon with him.

Folder 5: Sidney Lanier Poems

35. "Rose-Morals"
The file contains an early draft of the poem, apparently written at two different times; the first part, which would later be the section titled "Red," lacks a number and a section title, while the second part, the part which is titled "White" in the published version, is marked with a the roman numeral "II" and retains its section title "White."
36. "Longing"
Included is both a handwritten and typed version of the poem. Versions are nearly identical aside from minor punctuation conventions, probably in some part inherent in the transition from handwritten to type. Last few lines are adapted into the Poem elsewhere in the collection, "Laus Mariae." "Longing" is dedicated to M.D.L. (probably Mary Day Lanier).
37. "Laus Mariae" (or "In Absence")
This seven part poem is given three titles within the collection's typed and written copies of the poem. It is first called "Laus Uxori" on the first page of the written manuscript, but "Laus Mariae" on the remaining pages. Then in the typed version of the text, Lanier titles the poem "In Absence." Speaking in relation to the published versions of "In Absence" and "Laus Mariae," sections I, II, V, and VII seem analogous to (and contains lines of) passages in the published version of "In

Absence,” while only section III seems to have been ultimately adapted into the Lanier’s published version of “*Laus Mariae*.”

Folder 6: Newspaper Clippings

38. Newspaper articles largely written in the year of Lanier’s death (1881), about the death of Sidney Lanier. The folder includes obituaries, journalistic articles, and a poem written by Charles G.D. Roberts entitled “To the Memory of Sidney Lanier,” perhaps the only work evidently written in 1882 rather than 1881.
39. Two articles on Paul H. Hayne in which Lanier is briefly mentioned (one of which is dated 21 May 1886)
40. An article reviewing Lanier’s book *The Science of English Verse*, probably from 1880 the year the book was published.