

MSS. Collection #70

Swaim Family Papers, 1826-1920 [bulk 1842-1920]. ½ box (29 folders), 46 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

The principal subjects associated with this collection are **Lyndon Swaim** and his eldest daughter, **Isabella Logan Swaim**. Each one generated materials that cover different periods in the family's history; therefore, those items can be viewed as discrete portions of the collection.

Researchers will find the collection strong in materials relating to Lyndon Swaim's **financial** and **legal** affairs, as they relate to his activities in Greensboro, North Carolina, between 1835 and 1888. In particular, legal documents reveal aspects of his business relationship with **Michael Swaim Sherwood** and the history of the *Greensborough Patriot*. In addition, deeds documenting his land transactions help illuminate the evolution of Greensboro's antebellum development. Also of interest to students of cultural history may be the **drawings** and **expository writing** of Isabella L. Swaim and the correspondence between her and **H.A. Ogden** and **F.H. Packer**, men of note in the art world around 1915. For researchers interested in the **Logan** family, the collection contains some genealogical information.

Arrangement: The materials that compose the Swaim Family Papers are alphabetically arranged into the following seven series: **Correspondence**, 1861-1915; **Drawings**, ca. 1894-1920; **Financial**, 1826-88; **Legal**, 1834-66; **Literary**, ca. 1900-20; **Logan**, 1827-42; and **Printed**, ca. 1850-87.

Provenance: The bulk of the Swaim Family Papers was donated by the estate of Isabella Swaim and assigned accession numbers 1971.184.1-4. Other accession numbers associated with the collection are 1972.143.14 and 1980.5.2. Included in the first group were approximately two and a half dozen photographs, ca. 1900, of family members and Greensboro scenes. The photographic materials are not included in this inventory, but they can be found in the photograph storage area of the Archives under the accession number. In addition, a 1904 photograph of "Belle" Swaim's home is contained in an album not associated with this donation (Oversize Flat Box 102, acc. no. 1981.63.230).

The Museum also possesses additional materials on the Logan family, which are contained in a folder in the Miscellaneous Collection. Also, there is genealogical material on the Swaim family in the Vertical Files of the Archives.

Researchers interested Lyndon Swaim may want to consult the inventory of his papers held in the Special Collections Library at Duke University. A copy of the inventory can be found in the first folder of this collection.

Processing: This collection was organized and the finding aid was prepared by Francis D. Pitts III in August 1999.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

In 1834, at the age of twenty-two, Lyndon Swaim (1812-1893) left home in Randolph County to work for his cousin William Swaim as a printer at the offices of the *Greensborough Patriot*. Upon the death of his cousin the next year, Lyndon Swaim's work there temporarily came to an end. Although this first foray in the printing business was short-lived, the event marked the beginning of what would become a long association with the Greensboro newspaper. He subsequently would be involved in the affairs of the newspaper during many of the next thirty-five years.

Swaim served the public in a number of official capacities as well, most notably as the Chairman of the Board of Superintendents of Common Schools in Guilford County; clerk of the county court; a commissioner of Greensboro; and as a representative from Guilford County in the state legislature. In the 1870s he began to study architecture, and later is reputed to have become successful as an architect of residences and public buildings in Greensboro.

Lyndon Swaim was married twice. His first wife, Abiah Shirley Swaim, was the widow of William Swaim. His stepdaughter from this marriage, Mary Jane Virginia, became the mother of William Sydney Porter, more familiarly known as O. Henry. Abiah Swaim died in 1858, and almost two years later Lyndon Swaim married his second wife, Isabella Logan, the daughter of John M. Logan of Greensboro. Their marriage produced four children: Isabella, Mary, Lyndon, and Logan. After years of declining health, the elder Lyndon Swaim died at the age of eighty.

Isabella Swaim (ca. 1860-1939), the other principal subject of this collection, was the eldest child of Lyndon and Isabella Logan Swaim. The remaining details relating to her life, for the most part, are not presently known. What is known, however, is that she was a writer and an artist. Her artistic ability may have been held in high esteem by some, for correspondence from noted men in the art world allude to Swaim at one time having been given a commission to produce a portrait of General Nathanael Greene. It is also apparent she had an interest in her family history, which is borne out by fact that she provided a biographical sketch of John M. Logan, her maternal grandfather, for *Founders and Builders of Greensboro, 1808-1908*. Telling information about other aspects of her life is most likely contained in the loose-bound writing tablets that form a part of this collection.

Biographical Sources: The most useful secondary sources that provided information on members of the Swaim family included the following titles: *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, Vol. 5, P-S, edited by William S. Powell (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1994); and *Founders and Builders of Greensboro, 1808-1908*, compiled by Bettie D. Caldwell (Greensboro, NC: Jos. J. Stone Company, 1925). In addition, the primary sources contained in the collection also shed light on the lives of the principal subjects.

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

Types of materials in this collection include **correspondence**, **drawings**, **legal** and **literary** documents, **receipts**, and **printed** matter.

The bulk of the collection pertains mainly to the activities of Lyndon Swaim and his daughter Isabella. Researchers will find interesting and important materials associated with these two people, especially as it relates to local and regional history.

Of special note among the Lyndon Swaim materials are the agreement (4:1), between him and Michael S. Sherwood, and the deed (4:3), from Sherwood, that illuminate aspects of the history of the *Greensborough Patriot*. For researchers interested in the development of Greensboro and Guilford County, the other deeds (4:2,4-6) and items pertaining to architecture and building (1:1; 2:2; 4:8) will provide useful information. Also of interest in the Lyndon Swaim grouping is the receipt that represents the final accounting of his papers and vouchers as the former **Chairman of the Board of Superintendents of Common Schools** in Guilford County (3:2). For astute observations on English mores and manners in the mid nineteenth century, researchers should see a letter written to Swaim from a correspondent who is believed to be Benjamin Sherwood, M.S. Sherwood's father (1:6).

Among the Isabella Swaim materials, the correspondence from H.A. Ogden (1:3), an authority on portraiture, and F.H. Packer (1:4), the sculptor of the Greene monument in the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, will be, perhaps, the most noteworthy to researchers. In these letters, information pertaining to representations of **General Nathanael Greene** is mentioned in relation to a commission that Ms. Swaim hoped to execute. Other materials in the collection, such as drawings (2:3) and expository writing (5:1-2), further reveal her artistic proclivities.

The collection also contains some genealogical information on the Logan family (1:7). For additional materials associated with this family, researchers should also see Series 6.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Correspondence. 7 folders (7 items). 1861-1915.

The bulk of this series consists of letters written to either Lyndon or Isabella Swaim. The items of interest to Lyndon Swaim are a note from a builder who has submitted plans for building his house (1:1); a letter from the Artificial Limb Department of the State of North Carolina (1:5); and correspondence from a man identified as "Ben," who is believed to be Benjamin Sherwood, in which astute observations are made on English mores and manners in the mid 19th century (1:6). The most noteworthy items to Isabella Swaim are letters from H.A. Ogden (1:3), an authority on portraits and illustrative renderings of General Nathanael Greene; and F.H. Packer (1:4), sculptor of the Greene monument erected in the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park. In these letters, information pertaining to various representations of Greene is mentioned in relation to a commission that Ms. Swaim was hoping to execute. Folder 1:7 contains information on Logan genealogy.

2. Drawings. 3 folders (11 items). ca. 1894-1920.

The most noteworthy items in this series are a rendering of a house (2:2), done by an unknown hand, and a group of drawings attributed to Isabella Swaim (2:3).

3. Financial. 5 folders (11 items). 1826-88.

This series contains a number of items of interest. The most noteworthy materials are receipts associated with Lyndon Swaim. In particular, researchers should see the final accounting of

Swaim's papers and vouchers as the former Chairman of the Board of Superintendents of Common Schools in Guilford County (3:2); and acknowledgments of his subscription to the Madison Branch Rail Road (3:4), for which he would receive stock in the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Rail Road, and to the capital stock of the National Bank of Greensboro (3:5).

4. Legal. 8 folders (9 items). 1834-66.

This series provides the researcher with a rich source of primary material. With the exception of one item, all of the materials directly relate to the activities of Lyndon Swaim. Of these items, the agreement with (4:1) and the deed (4:3) from M.S. Sherwood are important documents related to the history of the *Greensborough Patriot*. The other deeds in the series (4:2,4-6) contain invaluable information regarding the development of Greensboro in the antebellum period. Also of interest to researchers may be the contractor's proposal and specifications submitted to Swaim for building a house (4:8); it is unclear whether this document has any relation to the correspondence (1:1) and drawing (2:2) in the collection that pertain to architecture.

5. Literary. 3 folders (3 items). ca. 1900-20.

This series consists of two loose-bound writing tablets that contain musings and ruminations, entitled "Folklore" and "Scribblings," attributed to Isabella Swaim (5:1-2). In them, she explores aspects of vernacular culture, local history and events from her past. The remaining item appears to be a page from a paper on the history of architecture, particularly of church structures, in America (5:3).

6. Logan. 1 folder (3 items). 1827-42.

This small series consists of three items that have a connection with members of the Logan family. Perhaps the most interesting items in the group are the billfold, which has 1827 and *Greensboro N. Carolina* inscribed on the front, and an 1834 blotter used by John M. Logan, a longtime resident of Guilford County.

7. Printed. 2 folders (2 items). ca. 1850-87.

This series consists of an etching (7:1), entitled "The Oaken Bucket," and newspaper clippings from the 11 January 1887 edition of *The Morning News* (Greensboro).

FOLDER LISTING

Series	Folder	Contents	
1	1	Correspondence	-- Andrews, W.S. (1861)
	2	“	-- Bagley (?), William H. (1866)
	3	“	-- Ogden, H.A. (1915)
	4	“	-- Packer, F.H. (1915)
	5	“	-- Ryan, S.G. (1867)
	6	“	-- Sherwood, Benjamin (1859)
	7	“	-- Swaim, Isabella (?) (1914)
2	1	Drawings	-- Butterflies (n.d.)
	2	“	-- Cottage plan (n.d.)
	3	“	-- Swaim, Isabella (ca. 1894-1920)
3	1	Financial	-- Promissory notes (1826-46)
	2	“	-- Receipt -- Guilford County Common Schools (1853)
	3	“	-- Receipt -- Hedgcock, Matthew (1835-36)
	4	“	-- Receipt -- Miscellaneous (1842-88)
	5	“	-- Receipt -- National Bank of Greensboro (1876)
4	1	Legal	-- Agreement (1855)
	2	“	-- Deed -- Ross, Edward (1834)
	3	“	-- Deed -- Swaim, Lyndon -- Greensboro (1866)
	4	“	-- Deed -- Swaim, Lyndon -- McLean lot (1855)
	5	“	-- Deed -- Swaim, Lyndon -- Ross lot (1852)
	6	“	-- Deed -- Swaim, Lyndon -- Weatherly lot (1860)
	7	“	-- Notice (1848)
	8	“	-- Proposal (n.d.)
5	1	Literary	-- Swaim, Isabella -- Misc. exposition (ca. 1900-20)
	2	“	-- Swaim, Isabella -- “When the Orient Touched Old Greensboro” (ca. 1900-20)
	3	“	-- Swaim, Isabella -- Unidentified (nd)
6	1	Logan	-- Miscellaneous (1827-42)
7	1	Printed	-- Etching (nd)
	2	“	-- Newspaper clippings (1887)

Index to the Swaim Family Papers (1826-1920)

Note: The numbers following the name/subject entry – e.g. 1:1 – indicate in which Series#:Folder# 9or, if no “:”, Series only) that name/topic can be found. Dates of the items are given in parentheses for an individual Series/Folder or, if at the end, for the entire subject/name entry. The abbreviation GSO indicates a Greensboro association.

Adams, William: 4:2 (1834)

Andrews, W.S.: 1:1 (1861)

Architecture: 2:2 (nd); 4:8 (nd); 5:3 (nd)

Bagley (?), William H.: 1:2 (1866)

Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad: 3:4 (1888)

Cooper, Lippincott, Coffin & Co. (PA): 3:4 (1854)

Crowder (?), Alexander: 3:1 (1826)

Education: 3:2 (1853)

Gallaway, John M.: 3:4 (1888)

Greensborough Patriot: 3:3 (1835-36); 4:1,3 (1855-66)

Guilford County Common Schools: 3:2 (1853)

Harvey, Isaac: 4:7 (1848)

Hedgecock, Matthew: 3:3 (1835-36)

Krause (?), Junius A.: 4:7 (1848)

Lane, James: 4:7 (1848)

Logan, John E.: 4:6 (1860)

Logan, John M.: 6:1 (1827-34)

Logan, William M. (?): 6:1 (1842)

McLean, David: 4:4 (1855)

Madison Branch Railroad: 3:4 (1888)

Mitchell, Ishmael: 4:7 (1848)

Morning News, The (GSO): 7:2 (1887)

National Bank of Greensboro: 3:5 (1876)

Newspapers: *Greensborough Patriot*, 3:3 (1835-36); 4:1,3 (1855-66);

Morning News, The (GSO), 7:2 (1887)

North Carolina, State of: Artificial Limb Department, 1:5 (1867)

“**Oaken Bucket, The**”: print, 7:1 (nd)

Ogden, H.A.: 1:3 (1915)

Packer, F.H.: 1:4 (1915)

Prosthesis: 1:5 (1867)

Railroads: 3:4 (1888)

Ross, Edward: 4:2,5 (1834-52)

Ryan, S.G.: 1:5 (1867)

Schools: Guilford County, 3:2 (1853)

Sherwood, Benjamin: 1:6 (1859)

Sherwood, Michael Swaim: 4:1,3 (1855-66)

Springs, Grayson S.: 3:4 (1842)

Swaim, Isabella: 1:3-4,7 (1914-15); 2:3 (ca. 1894-1920); 5:1-2 (ca.1900-20)

Swaim, Lyndon: 1:1,5-6 (1859-67); 3:2-5 (1835-88); 4:1,3-8 (1848-66)

Transportation: 3:4 (1888)

U.S. government: tax form, 3:4 (1866)

Wadlington, William J.: 3:1 (1846)

Walker, J.: 3:1 (1846)

Watson (?), L.G.: 3:1 (1826)