

MSS. Collection #30

Alexander W. McAlister Family Papers, 1811-1986 [bulk 1912-1933].
6 boxes (100 folders), ca. 325 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 Alexander W. McAlister Family Papers consist primarily of materials pertaining to the McAlister/Little families, the Church by the Side of the Road, and Pilot Life Insurance Company. Also of note are items relating to Edgeworth Female Seminary and Greensboro High School. Alexander Worth McAlister Sr. was instrumental in the founding of Pilot Life Insurance Company, the Greensboro Country Club, Irving Park, and Sedgefield. He was also an elder in the Church by the Side of the Road and closely involved in its split from the Presbyterian denomination. Researchers interested in churches, educational institutions, businesses, or neighborhoods in Greensboro may find items of use in this collection. Genealogists may be interested in materials tracing the Little family line back to ancestor John Howland's immigration on the *Mayflower* and following the McAlister/Worth family lineage back to the American Revolution.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into seven series and arranged within series by document type and/or subject. The series are: **Church by the Side of the Road**, 1904-1958; **Genealogy**, 1811-1986; **Maps**, 1855-1880; **Miscellaneous**, 1855-1940; **Photographs**, ca. late 1840s-1951; **Pilot Life**, 1907-1978; and **Printed Materials**, 1849-1984.

Provenance: The bulk of this collection was donated by Dr. Jean McAlister in 1982 and 1984, and assigned the accession numbers 1982.1028.25-66 and 1984.38.5. Additional materials, including genealogical research, photo albums, a notebook, a recipe book, and items relating to Pilot Life, were donated by Margaret McAlister Sealy in 2001 and assigned the accession number 2001.75.1. Photos of the Smith/McAlister families, John Worth McAlister's diploma, and an 1861 vest pocket lexicon were donated by Sarah Little McAlister in 1989 and assigned the accession number 1989.81. Dr. Jean McAlister was the daughter of Alexander Worth McAlister Sr., and Margaret Sealy and Sarah Little McAlister were the daughters of John Worth McAlister and granddaughters of A.W. McAlister Sr.

The museum also possesses the [Little/McAlister Family Papers](#), which contain materials relating to the family groups represented in this collection. Researchers interested in either the Little or McAlister families may also want to consult the collections pertinent to these families held by the [Southern Historical Collection](#) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In particular, see #1861-z ([Alexander Carey McAlister Papers](#)), #3954 ([Benjamin Franklin Little Papers](#)), and #4318 ([Alexander W. McAlister Papers](#)).

Processing: The original collection donated by Dr. Jean McAlister was organized and a finding aid was prepared by an unknown individual prior to 1986. The collection was reorganized, the additions were incorporated, and a new finding aid was prepared by intern Rebecca Doss in July 2021.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Alexander Worth McAlister Sr. (1862-1946) was a prominent Greensboro businessman in the early 1900s. Born to Adelaide Worth and Alexander Cary McAlister in Asheboro, North Carolina, he graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1882 and also attended law school in Chapel Hill, receiving his license in 1887. He moved to Greensboro in 1890 and began working with his uncle, T.C. Worth, in the Worth-Wharton Real Estate and Investment Company. In 1895, the officers of this company organized Greensboro's first fire insurance agency, the Southern Stock Mutual Fire Insurance Company, then changed the name to Pilot Fire Insurance Company in 1899.

In 1903, the Southern Loan and Trust Company, formerly Worth-Wharton Real Estate and Investment Company, split its real estate and life insurance departments. McAlister organized the life insurance department into Pilot Life Insurance Company, and he served as its president from 1908-1931, and again from 1932-1934 after the death of President C.W. Gold. In 1945, the company merged with Gate City Life Insurance Company, owned by Jefferson Standard, and they formed Jefferson-Pilot Corporation in 1968. The real estate departments of the Southern Loan and Trust Company became the Southern Real Estate Company in 1904, and this company oversaw the creation of the Southern Trust Building, the Greensboro Country Club, Irving Park, and the Sedgefield Country Club, Sedgefield Inn, and Sedgefield residential areas.

A.W. McAlister Sr. served as an elder in both First Presbyterian Church and the Church by the Side of the Road, originally Bessemer Avenue Presbyterian Church. The Church by the Side of the Road split from the Presbyterian denomination, becoming the nondenominational Community Church in the 1930s. He was an organizer and the first president of the Greensboro Council of Catholics, Jews, and Protestants, and he also helped organize the Greensboro Welfare Board. As a member of the state welfare board for almost thirty years, he was key in the establishment of separate welfare boards in each county in North Carolina.

On April 11, 1896, A.W. McAlister Sr. married Sarah Little (1872-1967), and they had six children: Frank Little (1895-1945), John Worth (1897-1956), Lacy Little (1898-1983), Jean Colvin (1900-1987), Alexander Worth Jr. (1902-1985), and Flax Reid (1905-1957). John and Lacy graduated from Greensboro High School in 1915 and 1916, where Lacy participated in football, baseball, basketball, and track. Notably, Dr. Jean McAlister worked as a pediatrician for thirty years, earning recognition from *The Journal of Pediatrics* and President Harry Truman.

Key items in this collection from the Little side of the family pertain to Edgeworth Female Seminary and Carlisle plantation. Mary Jane Reid, the mother of Sarah Little McAlister, graduated from Edgeworth Female Seminary in 1850. The all-female school was founded in 1840 by John Motley Morehead, and it operated intermittently until burning down in 1872. The Carlisle plantation featured in many photos was built by Benjamin Franklin "B.F." Little, father of Sarah Little McAlister, in 1859 in Richmond County, North Carolina. Col. B.F. Little later served in the Civil War, losing his left arm while fighting for the Confederacy at Gettysburg.

A.W. McAlister Jr. worked as a field hand at the plantation in the early 20th century, and the house burned down in 1963.

Biographical Sources: The biographical information was obtained from the genealogical and Pilot Life series of the collection, and from the article about A.W. McAlister Sr. in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, Vol. 4 L-O, edited by William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Details about Edgeworth Female Seminary were gathered from the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources' web page about the related highway historical marker (<http://www.ncmarkers.com/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=J-34>).

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The types of materials in this collection include church records, genealogical research, photographs, histories, maps, printed materials, and notebooks. The Pilot Life series is relevant to both the McAlister family and Greensboro history, and it contains A.W. McAlister Sr.'s histories of the company, as well as company publications and records. Researchers interested in Greensboro businesses may appreciate the connections drawn between Pilot Life, Jefferson Standard, Sedgefield, Irving Park, and the Greensboro Country Club.

The collection also contains documents pertaining to the Church by the Side of the Road, at which A.W. McAlister Sr. served as an elder. Many of these discuss the church's shift away from the Presbyterian denomination and towards a more congregationalist "Community Church." Two photos of Miss Florence Hunt's music class and two of Red Cross groups during World War I were taken in front of buildings at First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, where McAlister Sr. was also an elder.

Researchers studying 19th-century female higher education may find the items from Edgeworth Female Seminary of interest, especially the anniversary program and graduation broadside. Several photographs show Greensboro High School sports teams in the 1910s, some of which were taken by William J. Moose. The printed materials also contain items relating to Greensboro High School, such as diplomas and copies of the annual entitled *The Reflector*.

A large portion of the collection consists of genealogical information regarding the McAlister/Little families. Much of this research was done by members of the McAlister family, and their personal notes are included alongside copies of primary sources. A.W. McAlister Jr.'s book, *From These Ruins*, summarizes the history of Carlisle plantation in Richmond County, and includes interesting information about the workings of the plantation and the relationship of the family to the workers, many of whom were formerly enslaved. The bulk of this collection consists of photographs, most of which feature members of the McAlister/Little families and their homes. Notably, a few photos depict African Americans at Carlisle plantation, some of whom are identified. Several family names are included in this collection; on the Little side, Phillips, Reid, Latta, and Knox are relevant, and on the McAlister side, Worth, Vaughn, Smith, and Gardner are most important.

The main weakness of this collection is an absence of letters and diaries. As a result, the collection does not provide significant insight into the personal life of A.W. McAlister Sr., or into the personal and professional lives of his family members.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Church by the Side of the Road. 13 folders (19 items). 1904-1958.

This series consists of items pertaining to the Church by the Side of the Road, later known as the Community Church, where A.W. McAlister Sr. served as an elder. Included are church records such as budget and membership records (1:1), minutes and proceedings (1:6-8), and registers (1:11-12). The map profile (1:5) and site plan (1:13) provide interesting geographical information, and the church history (1:4) and correspondence (1:3) are valuable for their documentation of the split from the Presbyterian denomination.

2. Genealogy. 10 folders (ca. 100 items). 1811-1986.

The genealogical research primarily relates to the McAlister, Worth, and Little families. Many documents are copies of original sources and notes created by members of the McAlister family. Key items include charts of the families' lineage, obituaries, newspaper clippings, and the family history, *From These Ruins* (2:1), written by A.W. McAlister Jr. The book is remarkable for its details about Carlisle plantation and includes information on the African Americans enslaved by both the Reid and Little families. The items related to Marshal Peter Stewart Ney discuss the controversy regarding whether he was Napoleon's marshal who escaped execution in France and fled to North Carolina (2:8).

3. Maps. 3 folders (3 items). 1855-1880.

The maps are: a copy of *Ginn and Heath's Classical Atlas* published about 1880 (3:1); B.F. Little's copy of "Maps and Views to accompany message and documents" of the President to Congress in 1856 (3:2); and a colored Colton Map of North Carolina from 1885 (3:3).

4. Miscellaneous. 4 folders (4 items). 1855-1940.

This series consists of items that belonged to A.W. McAlister Sr., Mary Jane Little, and Flax Reid. A.W. McAlister Sr.'s notebook contains personal thoughts and lists of names (4:1), and his "year book" agenda contains handwritten drafts of correspondence (4:4). Also included are a valentine addressed to Miss Flax Reid in Iredell County (4:3) and Mary Jane Little's recipe book (4:2), in which the recipes are glued over the pages of *Memorial Addresses: Life and Character of Rush Clark, April 29th and 30th, 1879*.

5. Photographs. 29 folders (ca. 100 items). ca. late 1840s-1951.

The majority of the photographs feature members of the McAlister/Little families and Greensboro High School sports teams, with several of the latter taken by local photographer William J. Moose. Of particular note are two photos of Red Cross groups taken outside First Presbyterian Church during World War I (5:9). Also of interest are landscapes (5:15), images of Carlisle plantation in Richmond County (5:11), and photos of the McAlister home at 700 Country Club Drive in Greensboro's Irving Park neighborhood (5:12).

The portraits of A.W. McAlister Sr. include a set of four showing him from childhood through later adulthood, as well as three photos taken when he visited the Cornwallis Oak (5:22). In three group photos, members of the McAlister, Little, and Worth families are gathered on the front porch at Carlisle plantation in the 1890s-1900s (5:7). Other photos shows A.W. McAlister, his wife and their children sightseeing in Washington, DC, in the 1910s, and posing in the yard at their Irving Park home in 1944 (5:7).

A highlight of this series are the photos taken at Carlisle that feature African Americans, some of whom are identified (5:1). Amongst them are “Uncle” Henry and a woman called “Mammy,” who are pictured sitting on the front porch of a cabin. Henry had lived at Carlisle since B.F. Little had built the house, and he accompanied Little throughout the Civil War, including at the Battle of Gettysburg. “Aunt” Ellen, “Aunt” Louisa and an unidentified African American woman are the subjects of another image.

Other portraits of note feature Adelaide Worth McAlister (5:25), Jean McAlister as a young woman (5:25), Robert Galloway Vaughn (5:27), and Samuel Runckle Smith (5:27), who was Jacob Henry Smith’s father. One of the two images of Mary Kelly Watson Smith is a copy of a painting showing her as a young woman (5:27). A daguerreotype of Jane P. Little is accompanied by a copy ambrotype that was likely made after her premature death (5:20). The unidentified portraits are primarily daguerreotypes and ambrotypes, with one featuring a man in a Confederate uniform (5:28).

Three photo albums were created by John Worth McAlister Sr.’s wife, Mary Watson Vaughn, who joined the Greensboro Camera Club after taking photography classes at the Woman’s College of the University of North Carolina (later UNCG; 5:16-18). Among the landscapes is a photo she took of the “Liberty Oak” at Guilford Battleground, a copy of which was given to Eleanor Roosevelt during her visit to Greensboro in 1945 (5:15). The 1912 photo album relates to her time at Presbyterian College in Charlotte, North Carolina (5:17).

The photos of Miss Florence Hunt’s music class were taken in front of the Smith Memorial Building at First Presbyterian Church (5:8), and one image of a Red Cross group was captured in the same location, with the other taken nearby (5:9). Also included in this series are six souvenir stereocards, five of which were sold by Heinsberger’s Live Book Store in Wilmington, North Carolina (5:29). These stereocards are hand-colored and titled “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Knuckle Down,” “The Little Mischief,” “The Pic-Nic,” and “The Little Pilgrim.”

6. Pilot Life. 5 folders (ca. 40 items). 1907-1978.

The materials in this series relate to Pilot Life Insurance Company. Histories written by founder and president A.W. McAlister Sr. are particularly helpful for their information connecting Pilot Life to his other businesses, especially Jefferson-Pilot Corporation and Sedgfield (6:3). Other items include correspondence and financial records (6:1-2), newspaper clippings (6:4), and several *Pilot Life* (also called *Life with Pilot*) company publications (6:5).

7. Printed Materials. 36 folders (ca. 60 items). 1849-1984.

This series consists of a variety of printed materials, including items relating to Greensboro High School and Edgeworth Female Seminary, ephemera from some of A.W. McAlister Sr.’s businesses, and a diverse array of items providing insight into specific topics in Greensboro history.

The materials relating to educational institutions include a broadside showing the schedule of examinations and events during Edgeworth Female Seminary's anniversary celebration in May 1849 (7:6), as well as Mary Jane Reid's diploma (7:7). Two editions of the Greensboro High School annual entitled *The Reflector* (7:9-11) were published during World War I, and serve as both a yearbook and literary magazine. John and Lacy McAlister's diplomas from the Greensboro Public Schools are also relevant to Greensboro High School (7:5). An issue of the *Guilford College Bulletin* details the history of that institution (1934; 7:21).

Multiple items relate to the businesses associated with A.W. McAlister Sr. The Greensboro Country Club was born out of his passion for golf, and relevant items include his share certificate and life membership card, as well as correspondence and a pamphlet (7:8). One brochure promotes Irving Park, which was developed by the Southern Real Estate Company (7:12), while others champion the Sedgefield community (7:30) and Sedgefield Inn (7:32). Also included are A.W. McAlister Sr.'s life membership card in Sedgefield Country Club (7:31), as well as menus from the Sedgefield Tea Room (7:30) and Sedgefield Inn (7:33).

Many items in this series pertain more generally to Greensboro history, such as a script from the Greensboro Sesquicentennial historical pageant (7:29). A pamphlet detailing the Battle of Guilford Courthouse was prepared by Mrs. Charles Van Noppen in 1915 for the Guilford Battle Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (7:17). Another pamphlet contains Mary Kelly Watson Smith's paper entitled "The Women of Greensboro, North Carolina: 1861-1865," which was read at a meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Greensboro in 1919 (7:20). Also of note are an issue of *The Public Welfare Quarterly* (1915; 7:22) and a report produced to mark 50 years of welfare services in Guilford County (1963; 7:26), which highlights A.W. McAlister Sr.'s role in the early years and includes a timeline and statistics.

FOLDER LISTING

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
1	1	Church by the Side of the Road	-- Budget and Membership records (Community Church, 1934-1935)
	2	"	-- "The Children's Page" (Short Bible stories, 1958)
	3	"	-- Correspondence (1921)
	4	"	-- History (ca. 1920s)
	5	"	-- Map -- Profile (1920)
	6	"	-- Minutes and Proceedings (1904-1922)
	7	"	-- Minutes and Proceedings (1922-1925)
	8	"	-- Minutes and Proceedings (1926-1929)
	9	"	-- Newspaper clippings -- <i>The Christian Endeavor World</i> (1927)
	10	"	-- Pamphlet (1921)
	11	"	-- Register (1904-1932)
	12	"	-- Register (1904-1932, copy 2)
	13	"	-- Site plan (proposed, 1920)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
2	1	Genealogy	-- Booklet -- <i>From These Ruins</i> (by A.W. McAlister Jr., 1969)
	2	“	-- Little family (1848-1977)
	3	“	-- Little family -- Property deeds (copies, 1818-1858)
	4	“	-- McAlister, Alexander C. (1916-1968)
	5	“	-- McAlister, Alexander Worth Sr. (1928-1967)
	6	“	-- McAlister -- The Pilgrim John Howland Society (1972-1986)
	7	“	-- Miscellaneous (1945-1970)
	8	“	-- Ney, Marshal Peter Stewart (1811-1944)
	9	“	-- Reid family (1820-1957)
	10	“	-- Worth family (1890-1964)
3	1	Maps	-- <i>Ginn and Heath's Classical Atlas</i> (1880)
	2	“	-- “Maps and Views to accompany message and Documents” [of the President of the U.S.] (1856)
	3	“	-- North Carolina (1855)
4	1	Miscellaneous	-- Notebook -- McAlister, A.W. Sr. (1935)
	2	“	-- Recipe Book -- Little, Mary Jane (ca. 1900-1920s)
	3	“	-- Valentine -- Reid, Flax (1855)
	4	“	-- “Year Book” -- McAlister, A.W. (1940)
5	1	Photographs	-- Group photos -- African Americans at Carlisle (ca. 1900-1920)
	2	“	-- Group photos -- Boys' and girls' basketball teams (Greensboro High School, 1915)
	3	“	-- Group photos -- Boys' baseball team (Greensboro High School, ca. 1914)
	4	“	-- Group photos -- Boys' football team (1908)
	5	“	-- Group photos -- Boys' football team (Greensboro High School, ca. 1914)
	6	“	-- Group photos -- Boys' track team (Greensboro High School, ca. 1914)
	7	“	-- Group photos -- Little/McAlister families (ca. 1890s-1944)
	8	“	-- Group photos -- Miss Florence Hunt's music class (n.d.)
	9	“	-- Group photos -- Red Cross (ca. 1918)
	10	“	-- Headstones -- Little family (n.d.)
	11	“	-- Houses -- Carlisle (Richmond County, NC)
	12	“	-- Houses -- McAlister family (700 Country Club Dr., Greensboro, ca. 1920s-1951)
	13	“	-- Houses -- Piedmont Springs (Danbury, NC, ca. 1908)
	14	“	-- Houses -- Unidentified (n.d.)
	15	“	-- Landscapes (ca. 1945, n.d.)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
5	16	Photographs	-- Photo Album -- Vaughn, Mary Watson (1908-1912)
	17	"	-- Photo Album -- Vaughn, Mary Watson (Presbyterian College, 1912)
	18	"	-- Photo Album -- Vaughn, Mary Watson (n.d.)
	19	"	-- Portraits -- Little, B.F. (ca. 1850s-1870s)
	20	"	-- Portraits -- Little/Reid (ca. 1855-1930s)
	21	"	-- Portraits -- Little, Thomas (ca. 1830s-1850s)
	22	"	-- Portraits -- McAlister, A.W. (ca. 1865-1930s)
	23	"	-- Portraits -- McAlister, Sarah Little (ca. 1896-1960s)
	24	"	-- Portraits -- McAlister, Sarah Little (framed; ca. 1896)
	25	"	-- Portraits -- McAlister/Worth (ca. 1890s-late 1920s)
	26	"	-- Portraits -- McAlister/Worth (framed; ca. 1900)
	27	"	-- Portraits -- Smith/Vaughn (ca. 1850s-1930s)
	28	"	-- Portraits -- Unidentified (ca. late 1840s-1860s)
	29	"	-- Stereocards (ca. 1890)
6	1	Pilot Life	-- Correspondence (1930-1933)
	2	"	-- Financial (1915-1933)
	3	"	-- Histories (n.d.)
	4	"	-- Newspaper clippings (1907-1978)
	5	"	-- Publications (1932-1978)
7	1	Printed Materials	-- Book -- <i>Jenkins Vest-Pocket Lexicon</i> (1897)
	2	"	-- Booklet -- Duke University (ca. 1930)
	3	"	-- Broadside -- Cleveland Mineral Springs (ca. 1885)
	4	"	-- Certificate -- McAlister, Jean (Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, 1935)
	5	"	-- Diplomas -- McAlister, John and Lacy (Greensboro Public Schools, 1915-1916)
	6	"	-- Edgeworth Female Seminary -- Anniversary Program (1849)
	7	"	-- Edgeworth Female Seminary -- Diploma (Mary Jane Reid, 1850)
	8	"	-- Greensboro Country Club (1912-1984)
	9	"	-- Greensboro High School -- <i>The Reflector</i> (Annual, 1916)
	10	"	-- Greensboro High School -- <i>The Reflector</i> (Annual, 1916, copy 2)
	11	"	-- Greensboro High School -- <i>The Reflector</i> (Annual, 1917)
	12	"	-- Irving Park (ca. 1915-1920s)
	13	"	-- <i>National Parks Portfolio</i> (1916)
	14	"	-- National Parks -- Gettysburg (1930)
	15	"	-- National Parks -- Great Smoky Mountains (ca. 1926)
	16	"	-- Newspapers -- <i>Harper's Bazar</i> (1893)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
7	17	Printed Materials	-- Pamphlet -- "The Battle Field of Guilford Court House" (1915)
	18	"	-- Pamphlet -- The Men and Religion Forward Movement (n.d.)
	19	"	-- Pamphlet -- "The Only Game" (golf; n.d.)
	20	"	-- Pamphlet -- "The Women of Greensboro, North Carolina, 1861-1865" (by Mrs. J. Henry Smith; 1919)
	21	"	-- Periodical -- <i>Guilford College Bulletin</i> ("The Story of Guilford College," January 1, 1934)
	22	"	-- Periodical -- <i>The Public Welfare Quarterly</i> (Greensboro, 1915)
	23	"	-- Program -- First Presbyterian Church (1936)
	24	"	-- Program -- Presidential inauguration (1941)
	25	"	-- Programs -- Theatre (New York, 1924-1925)
	26	"	-- Report -- Welfare services in Guilford County (1963)
	27	"	-- Roosevelt, Franklin Delano -- Magazines (1945)
	28	"	-- Roosevelt, Franklin Delano -- <i>The Roosevelt Record</i> (August 4, 1936)
	29	"	-- Script -- Sesquicentennial Historical Pageant ("Enter the Gate City," 1958)
	30		-- Sedgefield (ca. late 1920s-1930s)
	31	"	-- Sedgefield Country Club -- Membership card (A.W. McAlister, 1938)
	32	"	-- Sedgefield Inn -- Brochures (ca. late 1920s-1930s)
	33	"	-- Sedgefield Inn -- Menu (1927)
	34	"	-- Speech -- "Looking Forward" (Presidential address to the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina, by John Wesley Long, 1923)
	35	"	-- Speech -- "The Wisdom of the Past, a Prophecy of the Future" (Presidential address before the Southern Surgical and Gynecological Association, by John Wesley Long, 1914)
	36	"	-- Year Book -- Guilford Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy (1922-1923)