ERSKINE-GORDON-LE CONTE PAPERS
1780-1940

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INTRODUCTION

The Erskine-Gordon-Le Conte Papers are centered around Dr. Alexander Erskine (1832-1913), noted physician and professor at the Memphis Hospital Medical College, his wife Margaret Louisa Gordon (1842-1914), and her sister, Mary Brown Gordon Le Conte (ca. 1851-1902), wife of Dr. James N. Le Conte.

The materials in this collection measure 3.78 linear feet. There are no restrictions on the materials.

Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Erskine-Gordon-Le Conte Papers may be made for purposes of scholarly research.
SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Erskine-Gordon-Le Conte Collection, containing approximately 1,000 items, covers the period from 1780 to 1940. The collection is composed of accounts, advertisements, announcements, cards, certificates, church records, correspondence, court records, financial documents, genealogical data, invitations, journals, land records, legal documents, licenses, obituaries, photographs, poetry, programs, recipes, remedies, school records, slave records, and writings.

The major portion of this collection consists of correspondence, spanning the period of the 1800’s. The three main correspondents are: Dr. Alexander Erskine, a noted physician and professor of obstetrics and the diseases of children at Memphis Hospital Medical College, Memphis, Tennessee; Lou Gordon Erskine, his wife; and Mary Brown Gordon LeConte, wife of Dr. James N. LeConte and sister of Lou Gordon Erskine. Their letters reflect a genteel way of life in the 1800’s, shared by the Erskines in Memphis and Mary LeConte in Columbia. Mrs. LeConte lived most of her life with her brother, George Washington (“Wash”) Gordon, on the family farm called Boxwood. In reading their correspondence, one can relive the social whirl of life on Beale Street in Memphis, as well as the pastoral pleasures offered by the rural life in Columbia.

Other letters of particular interest are those written by George Washington Gordon, father of Lou Erskine, Mary LeConte and “Wash” Gordon, in the 1840’s and 1850’s. From his health resort in Gordon Springs, Georgia, George Washington Gordon relates his progress, as well as the difficulties of his business venture.

Of great interest to any researcher will be the journal of Margaret Erskine, grandmother of Dr. Alexander Erskine. Margaret was born on February 28, 1753, in Pennsylvania. In her journal, she describes her journey through the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky, her capture and subsequent account of her bravery and intelligence, which enabled her to survive the barbaric tortures of her captors. The closing page of the journal offers genealogical data on the Erskine family.

The land records offer an invaluable account of the acquisitions made by the Bradshaw family in the early 1800s, and would be of great interest to a family researcher. Likewise, the slave records and legal documents contain a detailed account of the business dealings of this prosperous family. However, the true value of this collection is the correspondence. A family’s history is traced, event by event, year by year, and personalities bloom on the pages of these letters. The overall picture becomes one of a devoted family, sharing their lives through the only means of communication available to them.
Biographical Sketch

Dr. Alexander Erskine

1832  Born at Huntsville, Alabama, son of Alexander and Susan Catharine Erskine

Graduated from the University of Virginia in the “Classical Course”

Several years spent in hospital work in New York City

1858  Moved to Memphis and began the practice of medicine

1860  Married Mrs. Augusta Law White, daughter of Mrs. Sarah Gordon

1861-1865  Enlisted in the Confederate Army as a surgeon

Served in the 15th Tennessee Infantry under Colonel Tyler

Served in the 2nd Tennessee Infantry under Colonel Robertson

Fought in the Battle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and the Battle of Perryville, Kentucky

In charge of the army hospital at LaGrange, Georgia

Paroled at Covington, Georgia

1868-1873  Dean of Memphis Hospital Medical College, Memphis, Tennessee

1872  Married Margaret Louisa Gordon, daughter of George Washington Gordon

1885-1906  Professor of Obstetrics and diseases of children at Memphis Hospital Medical College, Memphis, Tennessee

1902-1910  Served on the staff of Memphis Hospital, Memphis, Tennessee

1913  Died at the age of 81
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