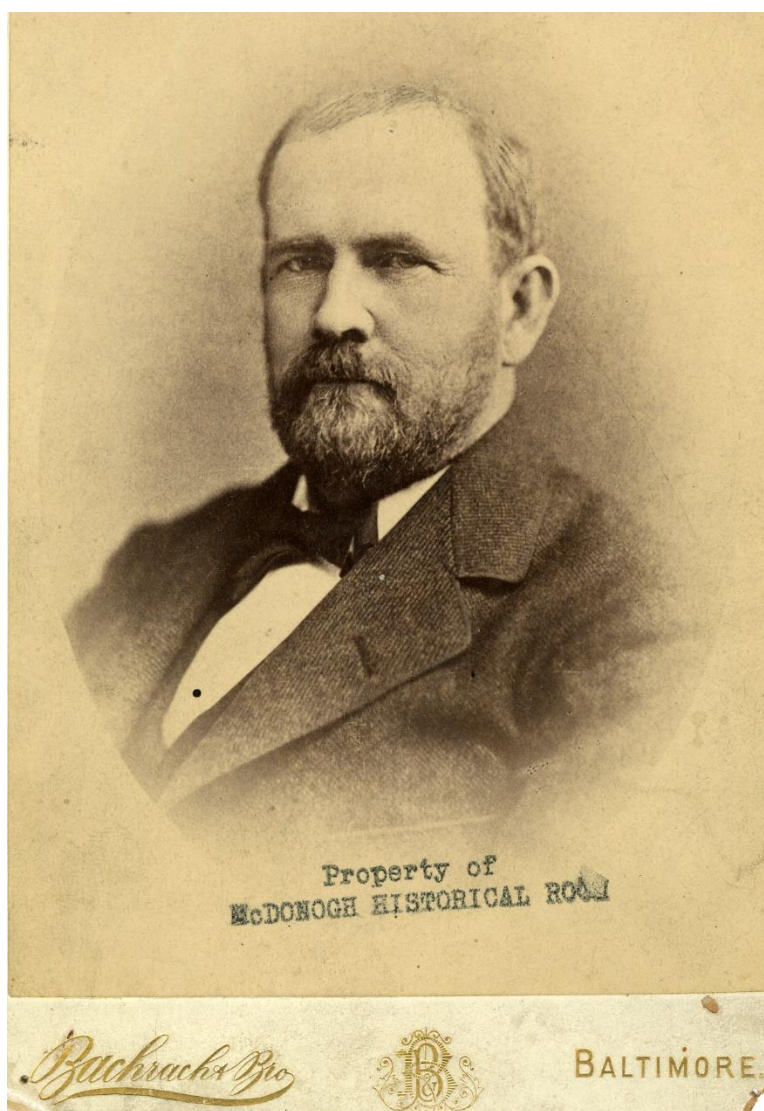




MCDONOGH SCHOOL

Archives & Special Collections

Guide to the Col. William Allan Collection



Processed by Caitlin Rapalski, Class of 2024
Updated and Edited by Kathleen Morrison, Archivist
February 2025



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MS-13: The Colonel William Allan Collection

(3 Boxes, .82 cubic feet)

Inclusive Dates: c.1866 - 2013

Bulk Dates: 1870-1892

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Provenance

This artificial collection was created over time by multiple people who drew from various kinds of sources. Facsimiles and photocopies have been noted where present and attributed to their original institutions or sources when possible.

Biography

Colonel William Allan was McDonogh School's first headmaster, hired by the Board of Trustees to lead the young school in its formative years. He held this position until his death in 1889.

William Allan was born on November 12th, 1837, in Winchester, Virginia, to Thomas Allan and Jane Dowdell George Allan. He attended a local private school, then taught in both Jefferson County and Winchester in order to raise money for college. He entered the University of Virginia in 1857, graduating with honors in 1860 with a MA in Applied Arithmetic. From there, Allan moved to Loudoun County and worked as an assistant to the principal of Bloomfield Academy.

When the Civil War started, Allan enlisted in the Confederate Army as a clerk in the quartermaster department under General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson. Under the sponsorship of his former UVA classmate Alexander Pendleton, Allan took the ordnance officer examination in 1862. He became a captain of artillery and was then appointed to Jackson's staff as chief of ordnance of the Second Corps, Army of Northern Virginia. He eventually rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel and ended the war as a member of Jubal Early's Shenandoah Valley command.

After the war, he had a brief stint as a cashier of the National Valley Bank in Staunton. At Robert E. Lee's request, Allan accepted an appointment as a professor of applied mathematics at Washington College (eventually Washington and Lee University) in Lexington, Virginia. He published three books on applied mechanics and wrote prolifically on the Civil War for the rest of his life.

William Allan was elected the first president of McDonogh Institute on November 21st, 1873. He married Elizabeth Randolph Preston on May 14th, 1874, and they had five children together. Elizabeth

Allan also became a successful author, writing two novels about a fictional school modeled off of McDonogh and multiple pieces about her stepmother, Margaret Junkin Preston, a Southern poet.

During his tenure as principal of McDonogh, William Allan published a biography of John McDonogh and served as a trustee of Washington and Lee University. He was active in multiple historical and post-Civil War organizations, like the Society of the Army and Navy of the Confederate States or the Southern Historical Society. Allan additionally was on the board of the Lee Memorial Association.

William Allan passed away at his home at McDonogh on September 17th, 1889. He was originally buried in Saint Thomas's Episcopal Church (albeit newspaper reports stating his remains were interred in Garrison Forest Cemetery) and eventually moved to the Tagart Memorial Chapel after its completion in 1898.

Scope and Content Notes

This collection mainly consists of secondary sources. However, of significant note are letters from Edward Valentine, a famous sculptor and proponent of the Lost Cause, to the McDonogh Board of Trustees discussing the creation of a bust of William Allan. These letters should be with the early Board of Trustees papers but for ease of research, they are included with the other Valentine-Allan Bust materials. The bust currently resides in the Upper School's Kiplinger Library.

The Wilson | Young Archives holds copies of Allan's books, including *The Army of Northern Virginia in 1862*, and the transcription of his post-war diaries by former McDonogh teacher Hugh Burgess. For further information, both Washington and Lee University and the University of North Carolina have materials about and from William Allan.

Series Description

The Col. William Allan Collection is divided into five series. **Series 1:** Biographical and Family; **Series 2:** Death and Memorials; **Series 3:** Bust of Allan by Edward Valentine; **Series 4:** Publications; and **Series 5:** Other Archival Holdings

Series 1: Biographical and Family contains biographical information about William Allan, his wife Elizabeth Randolph Preston, and their children, including autobiographical writings by Allan, articles from "The Week," and correspondence to and from Allan that dates from his time as Headmaster at McDonogh. Photocopies of material held by Washington and Lee University are also included.

Series 2: Death and Memorials has newspaper obituaries, copies of speeches and pieces written about Allan, and tributes to Allan such as a ceremony during the 91st Founders' Day celebrations. Also contains photos of memorials and portraits of Allan. Photocopies of material held by Washington and Lee University are also included.

Series 3: Bust of Allan by Edward Valentine contains all materials pertaining to the planning and creation of a posthumous bust of Allan that was carved by Edward V. Valentine, a talented sculptor from Richmond, VA. It also includes some information on Mr. Valentine himself, as a prominent figure and artistic advocate of the “Lost Cause” theory of the Civil War.

Series 4: Publications holds works written by Allan, such as his biography of John McDonogh and some of his writings and lectures on the Civil War.

Series 5: Other Archival Holdings contains information on where other materials on Allan and his family are located.

Box 1 of 3

Series 1: Biographical and Family

- 1-1** Autobiographical Materials. Includes typed copy of autobiographical writing by Allan, possibly from his scrapbook (kept in a separate collection), 1884
- 1-2** Photocopies of documents from the Civil War, including pay records, requisition sheets, and correspondence, 1862-1865
- 1-3** Transcribed and Annotated Portion of Allan’s Personal Journal. Transcribed by his daughter Jane Allan Bryan for Louis Lamborn. Journal dated 1888-1889
- 1-4** Biographical Material on Allan and his family, 1952-2013
- 1-5** Articles from McDonogh publications on Allan and his family, 1883-2007
- 1-6** Student Biographies of Allan. Biographies of Col. Allan written by McDonogh students as assignments, c. 20th century - 2009
- 1-7** Correspondence from Allan to the Board of Trustees, 1874-1887
- 1-8** Correspondence to, from, and about Allan, 1866-1883
- 1-9** Transcription and Photographs of Allan’s Copybook, a record he kept as Headmaster of McDonogh. The original Copybook is held in the Wilson-Young Archives, bulk 1874-1889

Series 2: Death and Memorials

- 1-10** Newspaper obituaries for Allan, including the Baltimore Sun and The Week, 1889- c.1930
- 1-11** Memorials to Allan, 1889-1938
- 1-12** Allan Memorial at the 91st Founders’ Day Celebration, 1864

Box 2 of 3

Series 3: Bust of Allan by Edward V. Valentine

- 2-1** Information on Edward Valentine and correspondence from him to the Board of Trustees regarding the bust, 1890-c.2010
- 2-2** Lyle Scrapbook on the Allan Bust, 1891-1904

- 2-3 "Unveiling of the Marble Bust of Col. William Allan" programs, Nov. 21, 1891
- 2-4 Images of the Allan Bust, 1938-1995

Series 4: Publications by Allan

- 2-5 Civil War materials, including an address on Gen. Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign and maps of Chancellorsville, which Allan wrote about in several of his books and likely fought at, 1878-1892

Series 5: Other Archival Holdings

- 2-6 Photocopies of materials on Allan held by Washington and Lee University, some of which are also present in earlier folders. These photocopies were sent upon request for materials by Frayda Salkin, former McDonogh archivist, and include photographs and documents, c. October 1865 (when Lee joined the school and hired his faculty) - 1990
- 2-7 Lists of Allan Family materials that are held at other institutions besides McDonogh and W&L University. Includes correspondence between archivists, 1990-2013

Box 3 of 3

- 3-1 "Life and Times of John McDonogh," published 1886 by the McDonogh School Board of Trustees. Also includes "Sketch of McDonogh School" by John Johnson, Jr. 12 copies.