

**See also UPA Microfilm
MF 6061, Series B, Part 4, Reels 12-15**

JOSEPH D. SHIELDS PAPERS
(Mss. 390, 1526, 1542, 1709, 1821, 1996, 2053)

Inventory

Compiled by
Tara Zachary
1997

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Revised 2009

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1802-1960

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SUMMARY

- Size.** 7.5 linear feet
- Geographic locations.** Louisiana; Mississippi, especially Natchez; Kentucky; Virginia; Tennessee.
- Inclusive dates.** 1802-1960.
- Bulk dates.** 1843-1897.
- Languages.** English.
- Summary.** Personal, political, financial, and plantation management correspondence and papers; original historical, literary, legal, and political manuscripts; and printed items of three generations of the Shields family of Natchez, Mississippi. The collection indicates political sentiment and social and economic conditions in ante-bellum and post-bellum Natchez. The papers specifically indicate the family's involvement in Mississippi politics, the Civil War, plantation owning, and civic service, as well as its literary endeavors.
- Access.** Longfellow letter (1886) and Washington College report card signed by Robert E. Lee restricted. Use photocopies at T:38, box 4 (Longfellow), T:43, box 19 (Lee)
- Source.** Purchased, 1936.
- Related Collections.** Magruder (Eliza) Diary (Mss. 654)
Available on MF 5750, Series E, reel 34 as the Joseph D. Shields and Family Papers, Eliza Magruder Diary, Mss. 654
- Copyright.** Physical rights are retained by the LSU Libraries. Copyright of the original materials is retained by the creators, or their descendants, in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
- Citation.** Joseph D. Shields Papers, Mss. 390, 1526, 1542, 1709, 1821, 1996, 2053, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
- Stack location.** T:37-T:44; 99:S; OS:S; Vault
- Also available on.** Microfilm 6061, Series B, Part 4, Reels 12-15
Series VI, Subseries 6-7 (Historical and Theatrical writings) and Series VII (Printed items) were not filmed.

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Joseph Dunbar Shields (1820-1886) of Natchez, Mississippi, lawyer, judge, legislator, planter, and author, was born in Jefferson County, Mississippi, at his family's home, Rokeby. His parents were William Bayard Shields (b. 1788) and Victoire Benoist (b. 1791). William Bayard Shields, first justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court and a participant in the state's territorial politics, died when Joseph was young. Joseph's maternal great uncle, Joseph Dunbar, a wealthy planter, and his wife, Olivia Magruder, informally adopted him. When Joseph was seven years old, his mother engaged Seargent Smith Prentiss, a well-known Mississippi orator, to tutor him. At the age of sixteen, Joseph entered the University of Virginia, graduating in moral philosophy in 1838, and law in 1840. In 1840, he returned to Natchez and worked in the law office of McMurrin and Quitman.

While attending the University of Virginia, Joseph met and became engaged to Elizabeth Fitzhugh Conway (d. 1883) of Charlottesville, Virginia. They were married in 1841 and made their home at the Hermitage in Adams County, Mississippi. There, the couple's first child, Joseph Dunbar Shields, Jr., "Dunbar" (1842-1864) was born. They moved to The Ridges in Jefferson County and there, four more children were born: Mary Conway, Edwin Conway, Bayard Fitzhugh, Nannie Hay. In 1852, the family moved to Natchez, making their home at The Birds Nest on North Union Street. Two additional children were born in Natchez, Abijah Hunt and Laurence "Dade." Edwin and Nannie did not survive infancy.

From 1852 to 1861, the family prospered as Joseph advanced in his profession. He was also active in civic organizations such as the Masons, literary societies, and his church. Devoted Episcopalians, the family worshiped at Trinity Church where Joseph served as vestryman, warden, and lay reader. He also supported the public schools and Fisk Library. In 1860, as civil war threatened, Joseph, a Whig, was elected to the state legislature. Though a slave holder, he did not engage in slave trafficking, and he worked for a peaceful solution to the sectional conflict until Mississippi seceded. Joseph attended the legislature in Jackson until 1863, while his family remained in Natchez. In 1863, however, the family removed to their plantation, Pecano, in Waterproof, Tensas Parish, Louisiana, after Elizabeth was ordered to leave by the Federal occupying forces for insulting the United States flag. While they were away, the Birds Nest was destroyed. In 1864, Dunbar, who had enlisted as a private in the Adams Troop of Natchez and served in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia, was killed at Culpepper, Virginia.

After the war, Joseph returned to Natchez to re-establish his law practice. In the meantime, his wife and children continued to live at Pecano and also stayed with relatives in Kentucky. They eventually returned to Natchez, and the Birds Nest was rebuilt on its original site. In 1866, Joseph went into partnership with James Carson and was also elected to a judgeship in probate court. Nevertheless, the war had brought financial difficulty for the Shields, and Joseph was in danger of losing his Louisiana plantation. In the years after the war, he began writing for newspapers and periodicals. In

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1883, the same year Elizabeth died, his biography of his former tutor, *The Life and Times of Seargent Smith Prentiss*, was published. He wrote under several pen names, including Shortfellow, Penumbra, Jew's Harp, and Jo Fairchild.

Mary Conway married William Forman Dunbar, owner of Wakefield Plantation, Adams County, Mississippi, in the late 1860s. They had four children: William Forman Dunbar, Jr., Elizabeth Conway, Joseph Shields, and Mary Shields. Bayard Fitzhugh Shields attended Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) in Lexington, Virginia, and Dade Shields attended school in St. Joseph, Louisiana. Mary's daughter Elizabeth married a member of the Murray family. A drama teacher, she was active in staging historical pageants and pilgrimages in Natchez. She also was instrumental in the posthumous publishing of Joseph Dunbar Shields' *Natchez, Its Early History*. An author herself, Murray wrote plays and *Early Romances of Historic Natchez*.

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Personal, political, financial and plantation management correspondence and papers; original historical, literary, legal, and political manuscripts; and printed items of three generations of the Shields family. The collection reflects political sentiment and social and economic conditions in Natchez. Correspondence forms one of the largest series of the collection. Early correspondence of William Bayard Shields reflects Mississippi politics during its territorial period. Subsequent correspondence consists primarily of personal letters between Joseph D. Shields, his wife Elizabeth Conway, and children. These include letters written and received by Shields while attending the University of Virginia, between Shields and Elizabeth Conway before their marriage; family letters to Elizabeth from relatives in Kentucky and Virginia; the Civil War letters of Dunbar Shields; and Joseph Shields's correspondence with his family while serving in the state legislature. In addition to family letters, post-bellum correspondence includes letters from the overseer of Pecano Plantation and with commission firms, creditors of the plantation. Communications with the publishers and sources consulted for *The Life and Times of Seargent Smith Prentiss* are also present. Financial papers relate to plantation management (e.g.-- the sale of cotton and purchase of slaves, contracts with freedmen and claims for captured cotton) and household expenses. Another large series in the collection is composed of the political, legal, and literary and historical writings of Joseph Dunbar Shields and the literary writings of Elizabeth Dunbar Murray. Genealogical materials consist of biographical sketches of William Bayard Shields and Joseph D. Shields, Sr., and transcriptions of records and letters relating to Gen. John Willis. Printed items include newspaper clippings regarding Natchez history, homes, deaths and family accomplishments; periodicals; speeches; military orders; and programs. Miscellaneous materials include a list of slaves furnished by Natchez area planters to work on Vicksburg fortifications, notice of impressment of cotton, vestry minutes, written military orders, and Shields' oath of allegiance. Photographic materials depict family members and Natchez historical parades and pageants. Manuscript volumes include a ledger for Wakefield plantation, daily packet book, law notebook (which includes a list of slaves owned by Shields in 1850), and a scrapbook of Shields' writings published in newspapers.

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LIST OF SERIES

- I. Correspondence, 1807-1949 (boxes 1-4)
- II. Financial papers, 1802-1909 (box 5)
- III. Genealogical materials, 1868, 1937, undated (box 5)
- IV. Miscellaneous, 1836-1925 (box 5)
- V. Photographic materials, 1935, undated (box 6)
- VI. Writings, 1833-1950 (boxes 7-18)
 - Subseries 1. Political
 - Subseries 2. Legal
 - Subseries 3. Speeches and Addresses
 - Subseries 4. Poetry
 - Subseries 5. Prose
 - Subseries 6. Historical
 - Subseries 7. Theatrical
- VII. Printed items, 1808-1961 (boxes 19-21,)
- VIII. Manuscript volumes, 1840-1935 (boxes 22-23)

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

I. Correspondence, 1807-1949

Early correspondence of William Bayard Shields reflects Mississippi politics during its territorial period. Letters document dissatisfaction with Governor Robert Williams, his proroguing the territorial legislature, and opinions on the nature of the relationship between the federal government and its territories. Several letters to and from George Poindexter, delegate, representative, senator, and attorney-general of Mississippi, are present.

Subsequent correspondence consists primarily of personal letters between Joseph D. Shields, his wife Elizabeth, and their children. Financial, plantation management, and professional correspondence is also present. Letters written by Shields while he attended the University of Virginia discuss his studies, the poor relationship between the faculty and students, and his courtship of and engagement to Elizabeth Conway. Letters between Shields and Conway relate social activities, news of family and friends, his travels, and their feelings for each other. Letters Elizabeth received after her marriage from relatives in Virginia and Kentucky detail social life, church-related activities (Episcopal), and family news.

The Civil War letters of Joseph D. Shields, Jr. record his service in the Confederate Army in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia. He relates the soldiers' unfavorable reception at Memphis, his dislike of army life and his officers, camp life, provisions, news of local boys, his illness, skirmishes at Langley, Va., and forays into Pennsylvania. Other letters of the same period detail Joseph Shields, Sr.'s activities as a state legislator in Jackson and his family's sojourn at Pecano Plantation and with relatives in Kentucky. He discusses bills he sponsored, appropriations issues, his church attendance, and acquaintances. Post-bellum letters consist of correspondence with the overseer of Pecano Plantation regarding crops, laborers, and supplies, and with publishers and sources for Shields' *The Life and Times of Seargent Smith Prentiss*. Other letters relate family news, economic conditions, and social and Episcopal Church activities in Natchez. A letter book (1866-1867) contains correspondence with a New Orleans commission firm, reflecting Shields' efforts to save Pecano financially. Of special note in the correspondence of this period is an autograph letter from Henry Wordsworth Longfellow to Shields in which Longfellow comments on Shields' poetry and a series of letters between Shields and James Biddle, the military commander at Natchez, discussing the authority of civil over military law and Shields' refusal to obey an order because of his beliefs.

The letters of Mary Shields Dunbar discuss her family and life at Wakefield Plantation and reflect her efforts to memorialize her father. Those of Elizabeth Dunbar Murray include congratulations for the success of her theatrical productions.

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II. Financial papers, 1802-1909

Financial papers include receipts, contracts, accounts, and drafts which relate to plantation management, household expenses, and costs incurred in publishing Shields' book. Items document the sale of cotton, the purchase of slaves, labor contracts with freedmen at Pecano and leesees at Wakefield, and claims for cotton taken from Wakefield during the Civil War.

III. Genealogical materials, 1868, 1937, undated

Genealogical materials consist of biographical sketches of William Bayard Shields and Joseph D. Shields, Sr., and transcriptions of records and letters relating to General John Willis.

IV. Miscellaneous, 1836-1925

Included in this series is a list of slaves furnished by Natchez area planters to work on fortifications at Vicksburg, notice of impressment of cotton, vestry minutes, orders, Shields' oath of allegiance before taking office, and a plat showing the land on which the Birds Nest was built.

V. Photographic materials, 1935, undated

Photographic materials consist of a photograph of an oil painting portrait of Joseph Shields that hung in the Mississippi state capitol, unidentified portraits, and photographs of historical parades and pageants staged by Elizabeth Dunbar Murray.

VI. Writings, 1833-1950.

Subseries 1. Political, 1833-1861, undated

Shields addressed issues such as the relationship between states and the federal government, the slave trade, the annexation of Texas, the Bank of the United States, and the Whig Party.

Subseries 2. Legal, 1866-1863, undated

Legal writings contain his rulings and opinions in cases.

Subseries 3. Speeches and Addresses, 1836-1886, undated

Included in this subseries are addresses to the Jefferson Society, Masons, agricultural organizations and Shields' July 4th orations.

Subseries 4. Poetry, 1877-1880, undated

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Subseries 5, Prose, 1908, 1933, undated

Essays and book reports from Shields' college days at the University of Virginia and short stories.

Subseries 6, Historical, 1932, 1959, undated

Included in this series are historical narratives about the Natchez Indians and Natchez and manuscripts of his works *The Life and Times of Sergeant Smith Prentiss*, *Natchez, Its Early History*, and *Scytala of a Deserter*. Also included here is the manuscript of Elizabeth D. Murray's *Early Romances of Historic Natchez*.

Subseries 7, Theatrical, 1921-1941, undated

Includes scripts for historical pageants and parades staged by Elizabeth D. Murray and a manuscript of her play *Badly Mixed*.

VII. Printed items, 1808-1961

This series contains newspapers and newspaper clippings, literary periodicals, pamphlets, programs, reports, advertisements, speeches, and ephemera. Clippings of articles about Natchez history and homes and Shields family members. Of special note are a report card of Bayard Shields from Washington College signed by Robert E. Lee and Joseph Shields' oath of allegiance.

VIII. Manuscript volumes, 1840-1935

This series contains a plantation ledger for Wakefield Plantation (1873-1874), daily packet book listing subscribers (1840-1850), legal notebook recording clients and settlements (1841-1884), and two scrapbooks, one containing newspaper clippings of Joseph Shields' letters, poems, and stories published in newspapers (1840-1876), the other containing newspaper clippings of poems, articles about Natchez, art, theater, and authors including Delsarte and Charles Dudley Warner (1892-1935).

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CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders</u>	<u>Contents</u>
			Series I. Correspondence
T:37	1	1-6	1807-1849
	2	7-11	1850-1864
	3	12-15	1866-1874 and letter book
	4	16-22	1880-1949, undated
Vault:1			Letter by Longfellow, 1886 [Restricted. Use photocopy at T:38, box 4]
			Series II. Financial Papers
T:38	5	23-24	1802-1885, 1909, undated
			Series III. Genealogical materials
		25-26	1868, [1912], 1937, undated
			Series IV. Miscellaneous
		27-28	1836-1925, undated
			Series V. Photographic materials
	6	29-33	[1935], undated
			Series VI. Writings
			Subseries 1, Political
T:39	7	35-39	1833-1861, undated
			Subseries 2, Legal
		40-41	1866-1868, undated
			Subseries 3, Speeches and Addresses
	8	42-46	1836-1886, undated
			Subseries 4, Poetry
	9	47-52	1877-1880, undated
			Subseries 5, Prose
T:40	10	53-56a	1908, 1933, undated

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<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders</u>	<u>Contents</u>
			Subseries 6, Historical
		57-58	undated
T:41	11-12	59-60	<i>The Scytala of a Deserter</i> , undated
	13	61	<i>The Scytala of a Deserter</i> , undated
T:42	14-15	62-66	<i>Natchez, Its Early History</i> , 1932
	16	67-68	<i>The Life and Times of Seargent Smith Prentiss</i> , undated
	17	69-71	<i>Early Romances of Historic Natchez</i> , [1950]
			Subseries 7, Theatrical
	18	--	Composition books ([1935], undated)
		72-73	Notes, scripts (1921-1941, undated)
		74	<i>Badly Mixed</i> (1929)
		75-76	Miscellaneous
			Series VII. Printed Items
T:43	19	77-93	1808-1961, undated
	20	94-98	Newspaper clippings, 1861-1928
	21	99-102	Newspaper clippings, 1931-1941, 1960, undated
OS:S	--	1	List of Mississippi state legislators, 1861
99:S	--	1	Newspapers
Vault	--	2	Report card signed by Robert E. Lee, 1866 [Restricted. Use photocopy at T:43, box 19]
			Series VIII. Manuscript volumes
T:44	22	--	Plantation Ledger (1873-1874) Packet Book (1840-1850) Legal Notebook (1841-1884)
	23		Scrapbook (1840-1876)
	--		Scrapbook (1892-1935)
MF 6061	--	--	Microfilm 6061, Series B, Part 4, Reels 14-15 Series VI, Subseries 6-7 (Historical and Theatrical writings) and Series VII (Printed items) were not filmed.