

**See also UPA microfilm:**  
MF 5750, Series E, Reel 15

**Ker (John and Family) Papers**  
(Ms. 3539)  
Inventory

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

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Proper acknowledgement of LLMVC materials must be made in any resulting writing or publications. The correct form of citation for this manuscript group is given on the summary page. Copies of scholarly publications based on research in the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections are welcomed.

### Summary

<b>Size.</b>	27 items and 1 volume
<b>Geographic locations.</b>	New Orleans, La.; Concordia Parish, La.; Tensas Parish, La.; Natchez, Miss.; Philadelphia, Penn.; Richmond, Va.; Ashland, Va.; Martinsburg, Va.; Liverpool, England
<b>Inclusive dates.</b>	1803-1862
<b>Bulk dates.</b>	1828-1862
<b>Language.</b>	English
<b>Summary.</b>	Papers of a doctor and plantation owner, John Ker, and his family, particularly from women in the family.
<b>Organization.</b>	Papers are organized into the following series: I. Stephen Duncan, Sr., letters, [1823]-1834; II. William H. Ker letters, 1861; III. Miscellaneous items, 1803 & 1861; IV. Mary Susan Ker journal, 1850-1851. Where applicable, the items are arranged chronologically within each series.
<b>Restrictions on access.</b>	If microfilm is available, photocopies must be made from microfilm.
<b>Related collections.</b>	John Ker Thesis, Mss. 945 William H. Ker Letters, Mss. 888 Stephen Duncan Correspondence, Mss. 1431, 1551, 1595, 1793 Stephen Duncan and Stephen Duncan, Jr. Papers, Mss. 126, 721 Stephen Duncan Letters, Mss. 4641 Stephen Duncan, Jr. Passport, Mss. 1350
<b>Copyright.</b>	Copyright of the original materials is retained by descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
<b>Citation.</b>	John Ker and Family Papers, Mss. 3539, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
<b>Stack location(s).</b>	S:108
<b>Also available on:</b>	Microfilm 5750, Series E, Reel 15

### **Biographical/Historical Note**

John Ker, a medical doctor and planter of Good Hope Plantation, Concordia Parish, Louisiana, was the father of Mary Susan and William H. Ker.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Letters from Stephen Duncan, Sr., of Natchez and Philadelphia, to Dr. John Ker discuss politics, cotton market, education, purchase of land and slaves, and the deaths of Duncan's son and brother. Letters from William H. Ker, Adams County Cavalry Troop A, in Confederate camps near Richmond, Virginia, to his mother and sister reflect the patriotic fervor of a young soldier, give details about camp life and troop movements, and discuss family matters and people from Natchez. The miscellaneous items include an incomplete letter by "aunt Maria," a list of slaves (1861-1862) on Dunbarton Plantation in Tensas Parish, Louisiana, a photocopy of David Ker's appointment (1803) to a judgeship in Mississippi, and a photograph of John Ker's tombstone. The diary (1850-1851) of 12-year-old Mary Susan Ker, written at Good Hope Plantation, provides details about family life after the death of her father. She also names places and various Natchez families in her diary. The Ker family spent summers in Natchez.

Series Descriptions

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Contents</u>
S:108	1	1-2		<b>Series I, Stephen Duncan, Sr. Letters</b>
			1823-1828	8 items:  Stephen Duncan, [?New York or Philadelphia], to John Ker, Natchez, Mississippi: Receives letter from Mr. Surget concerning plows; subscribes to the <i>National Gazette</i> ; comments on the excitement caused by the Marquis de Lafayette's visit and incidents such as selling Lafayette's bath water; refers to the Liverpool, England, cotton market, Mahamet Ali Pasha, and Egyptian cotton. [1823]  Stephen Duncan, n.p., to John Ker, New Orleans, Louisiana. Mentions rumors about Judge Butler's chance for a U. S. Senate seat; discusses selling Ker's cotton, Jan. 5, 1828.  Stephen Duncan, Natchez, Mississippi, to Dr. John Ker, New Orleans, Louisiana. Suggests buying land in the Natchez area and includes hand-drawn map of site, Nov. 27, 1828.  Stephen Duncan, Natchez, Miss., to Dr. John Kerr, New Orleans. Refers to the effects of water and oysters on health, Concordia Parish politics and Ned Livingston, the duties of state senators and the presidential election, Dec. 1, 1828.  Stephen Duncan, Natchez, Miss., to Dr. John Ker, New Orleans. Advises Ker to ship cotton on the <i>Franklin</i> , Dec. 5, 1828.  Stephen Duncan, Natchez, to Dr. John Ker, New Orleans. Discusses his inability to get women slaves; quotes prices; compares Virginia and Maryland blacks; mentions the presidential election and Panic documents, Dec. 6, 1828.  Stephen Duncan, Natchez, to Dr. John Ker, New Orleans. Discusses land in Natchez (the Linton triangle), Dec. 10, 1828.  Stephen Duncan, n. p., to Dr. John Ker, New Orleans. Discusses the problems of shipping cotton, R. H. Adams' candidacy for the U. S. Senate, cotton prices in New Orleans

and Natchez, buying six girls, and Judge Butler's candidacy.

1828-1834 7 items:  
undated

Stephen Duncan, n. p., to Dr. John Ker, New Orleans.  
Mentions shipping cotton, [1828]

Stephen Duncan, Philadelphia, Penn., to John Ker, Natchez, Miss. Discusses the death of Duncan's son from typhus and dysentery; refers to a *Christian's Spectator* article on Oliver Cromwell; search for teachers for an academy, Sept. 18, 1829.

Stephen Duncan, Auburn, Natchez, Miss., to Dr. John Ker, Donaldsonville, Louisiana. Tells of death of Duncan's brother; refers to a colonization society which he would like to have discussed in the Legislature, Jan. 24, 1830.

Stephen Duncan, Natchez, Miss., to Dr. John Ker, Donaldsonville, Louisiana. Discusses death of brother, Feb. 2, 1830.

Stephen Duncan, Natchez, Miss., to Dr. John Ker, Donaldsonville, La. Mentions sale of J. Moore's estate; discusses his own religious state and Mr. Pott's sermon, Feb. 7, 1830.

Stephen Duncan, Natchez, Miss., to Dr. John Ker, Donaldsonville, La. Refers to the sale of J. Moore's estate; purchases land for Ker; mentions Dr. Marill's[?] interest in the property and cotton prices, Feb. 27, 1834.

Stephen Duncan, n. p., to Dr. John Ker, care of Posthlweite and Babbit, Natchez, Miss. Discusses financial transactions, undated

S:108 1 3-4

**Series II, William H. Ker Letters**

July-Aug. 4 items:  
1861

William H. Ker, Richmond, Va., to sister, Mary S. Ker, n. p. (incomplete letter). Writes that his unit might go to Yorktown; Lt. Colonel Dreux and men of Louisiana Guard were killed in a skirmish; fighting occurred between Generals Johnston and

Patterson near Martinsburg, Virginia; that Dr. Choppin visited Ker's troop, July 7, 1861.

William H. Ker, Ashland, Virginia, to sister, Mary S. Ker, n. p. (incomplete letter). Speculates that the Federals will not attempt another invasion of Virginia; describes orderly's duties; gives detailed list of clothing to be sent from home; tells what is to be done with his part of cotton crop; refers to duties of black servants in camp; mentions serenade of young ladies near camp, Aug. 2, 1861 with Aug. 5 addition.

William H. Ker, Ashland, Va., to mother Mrs. Mary Ker, Natchez, Miss. Mentions several Natchez people who have visited army camp; lists more items to be sent from home, Aug. 12, 1861.

William H. Ker, Adams Troop, Ashland, Va., to sister, Mary S. Ker, Natchez, Miss. States that the Troop will be on active duty with Colonel [J. E. B.] Stuart's regiment; baggage and troops are moving to Manassas; comments of rumors of troop movements; refers to partiality shown Virginia troops; mentions Washington Artillery, the jealousy of the 'Tensas Cavalry' for Ker's unit and news of people in Natchez, Aug. 16, 1861.

Aug.-Nov. 4 items:  
1861

William H. Ker, Adams Troop, n. p., to mother, Mrs. Mary Ker, Natchez, Miss. Writes that Stuart is considered a fine officer; lists more items to be sent from home; mentions news of military activities in Missouri; hears rumors of Federal repulse along Potomac River and of England's recognition of the Confederacy.

William H. Ker, Company N, Stuart's Cavalry Regiment, Fairfax Court House, Virginia, to sister, Mary S. Ker, Natchez, Miss. States that the trunk from home arrived; it is impossible to buy pistols and field glasses in Richmond; speculates on the next troop movements and on Albert Sydney Johnston's appointment; mentions trading between enemy pickets and J. E. B. Stuart's promotion to brigadier general, Sept. 21, 1861.

William H. Ker, Company A, Jeff Davis Legion, Camp Qui Vive, to sister, Mary S. Ker, Natchez, Miss. Discusses a black servant, news about Natchez people, the slave insurrection that

recently occurred in Natchez, the composition of Ker's regiment which compares well with the Virginia regiments, company elections, a skirmish at Leesburg, and the rumor that 25,000 Federals refused to re-enlist, Oct. 27, 1861.

William H. Ker, Camp Cooper, to sister, Mary S. Ker, Natchez, Miss. Refers to daily camp routine, the black insurrection in Natchez, more items needed from home, news of naval actions off Port Royal and Hattaras, [Robert?] Ranson's North Carolina cavalry, the raffle of a horse in camp, and tableau vivants in Natchez.

S:108      1      5      Jan. 1803-  
Feb. 1862  
undated      **Series III, Miscellaneous Items**

David Ker's appointment to judgeship in Mississippi Territory signed by Thomas Jefferson, President, and James Madison, Secretary of State (Xerox copy), Jan 20, 1803.

Dunbarton Plantation slave list. Gives names and ages of blacks on Dunbarton Plantation, Tensas River, and is signed by Hollins, Feb. 10, 1861-Jan., 1862.

incomplete letter [from Aunt Maria]. Refers to likelihood of civil war and reasons, social events, teaching music and writing, and family news, undated

Photograph of John Ker's tombstone, born 1789, died 1850 at Good Hope Plantation, Concordia Parish, Louisiana, undated

S:108      1      --      Mar.1850-  
July 1851      **Series IV, Manuscript Volume: Mary Susan Ker Journal**

Mary Susan Ker Journal, as a twelve year old girl, refers to lessons, preaching, sorts such as fishing and riding, visiting, shopping, and the weather.

Mar. 31 - Mr. Hart preaches to black congregations every Sunday; Apr. 3,  
Aug. 13, 1850

Mrs. Ker attend orphan asylum meetings; May 4, 1850.

Mrs. Ker gives out summer clothing, May 25, 1850;



servants' wedding, July 22-23, 1850

family moves to Natchez for the summer, Aug. 24, 1850;

General Taylor's mock funeral, Sept. 22, 1850;

the family has been to Cooper's Well, June –July, 1851.

**Index Terms**

(This section provides the subject indexing for the collection found in the manuscript card catalog. Index terms have been changed to match Library of Congress Subject Headings. Documents relating to the subject given are described.)

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of relevant documents</b>
African Americans-- Marriage customs and rites--Louisiana-- Concordia Parish.	1850	on Good Hope Plantation; Mary Susan Ker assists with preparations, May 25.
African Colonization Society.	1830	Stephen Duncan suggests topic to be discussed in the Legislature; letter to Dr. John Ker, Jan. 24.
Concordia Parish (La.)	1803-1862, undated	
Concordia Parish (La.)-- Climate--Observations.	1850-1851	daily weather recorded in diary.
Confederate States of America. Army--Drill and tactics.	1861	description of army drill by disgruntled soldier; letter, Nov. 7.
Confederate States of America. Army--Medical care--Virginia.	1861	report of typhoid fever among troops; letter, Sept. 21.
Confederate States of America. Army-- Uniforms.	1861	detailed lists and descriptions of clothing requested to be sent from home; winter coats ordered made during preceding summer season; Wm. H. Ker letters.
Confederate States of America. Army. Jeff Davis Legion. Company A.	1861	Co. A. of Natchez; Jeff Davis Legion, Mississippi Cavalry; commander, Major William T. Martin; encamped at Ashland, Va.
Duncan, Stephen, 1787- 1867.	1823-1834, undated	15 letters, sent from Natchez, some from Philadelphia, addressed to Dr. John Ker, New Orleans and Natchez, concerning politics, plantation business, education, and the deaths of his son and brother.
Enquirer (Richmond, Va. :	1861	soldier writes that Richmond "Enquirer" is the

**KER (JOHN AND FAMILY) PAPERS**

1803-(1828-1862)

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1804)		most reliable newspaper from the Confederate capital; copies kept, "sold on speculation" by postmasters; letter, Aug. 2.
Field, Charles William, 1828-1892.	1861	CSA general; as colonel, instructor of cavalry, given credit for excellent performance; letters, Aug. 16, Sept. 21.
Girls--Diseases-- Louisiana.	1850-1851	12-year old girl mentions frequent headaches, going to sleep in church; sleep as remedy; diary of Mary Susan Ker.
Girls--Diseases-- Mississippi.	1850-1851	12-year old girl mentions frequent headaches, going to sleep in church; sleep as remedy; diary of Mary Susan Ker.
Good Hope Plantation (La.)	1851	last pages of diary; June 18, July 17.
Health resorts-- Mississippi.	1850	mentioned in diary, Sept. 22; Cooper's Well.
Johnston, Albert Sidney, 1803-1862.	1861	CSA General; in soldier's opinion, "outranks any General that we have;" letter, Sept. 21.
Ker, John, 1789-1850-- Tomb.		photo of tombstone of Dr. John Ker.
Ker, Mary Susan, 1838- 1923--Diaries.	1850-1851	12-year old Mary Susan Ker's diary, written at Good Hope Plantation and Natchez; comments on family members, planting, fishing and riding, weather, illness; Mr. Hart the preacher.
Military camps--Virginia.	1861	soldier's letters written at camps Ashland, Cooper, Qui Vive.
Natchez (Miss.)	1803-1862, undated	
Natchez (Miss.)--History-- Civil War, 1861-1865-- African Americans.	1861	allusion to uprising in Natchez; advice to restrict freedom of movement to servants; Oct. 27; expression of satisfaction that "the last of the witches have been hung," letter, Nov. 7.
Plantations--Louisiana-- Concordia Parish--	1851	last pages of diary; June 18, July 17.

Accounting.

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|--|-----------|--|
| Postal service--<br>Confederate States of<br>America.                              | 1861      | soldier reports generally reliable service<br>Virginia-Mississippi, but complains about<br>stamps on prepaid letters stolen by postal<br>employees; letters, Aug. 2, 12, 18. |
| Race riots--Mississippi--<br>Natchez.  | 1861      | William H. Ker to sister, Mary S. Ker, Natchez,<br>Miss., Oct. 27.   |
| Slaves--Louisiana--Tensas<br>Parish.   | 1861-1862 | Dunbarton Plantation slave list.   |
| Slaves--Religious life--<br>Louisiana--Concordia<br>Parish.                        | 1850      | Mr. Hart, teacher at Good Hope Plantation,<br>preaches for slaves; diary entry, Mar. 29.   |
| Tableaux.  | 1861      | mention of "tableaux vivants" staged in Natchez;<br>letter, Nov. 7.  |
| Taylor, Zachary, 1784-<br>1850.  | 1850      | General Taylor's mock funeral (d. July 9) at the<br>Court House; diary, Aug. 24.   |
| United States. Army--<br>Recruiting, enlistment,<br>etc--Civil War, 1861-<br>1865. | 1861      | unconfirmed report at Camp Qui Vive that<br>25,000 Federal soldiers refused to re-enlist; Oct.<br>27.  |

**Container List**

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>
S:108	1	1	<b>Series I, Stephen Duncan, Sr., letters</b> 1823-Dec.1828
		2	1828-Feb.1834, undated
		3	<b>Series II, William H. Ker letters</b> July-Aug.1861
		4	Aug.-Nov.1861
		5	<b>Series III, Miscellaneous items</b> Jan.1803-Feb.1862, undated
		--	<b>Series IV, Manuscript volume</b> <b>Mary Susan Ker journal</b>
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