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## Meriwether Family Papers (MSS 44)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives  
Department of Library Special Collections  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 44 MERIWETHER Family Papers**

½ box. 3 folders. 74 items. 1791-1949. Originals and typescripts.

1953.9.2

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

I. Charles Meriwether

Charles Meriwether (12 August 1766 – 7 October 1843), son of Nicholas and Margaret Douglas Meriwether, was born and reared in Albemarle County, Virginia. His father died in 1772, and his grandfather, Parson Douglas, tutored him and helped provide for his education. In 1789 Charles went to Edinburgh to enter medical school.

While in Edinburgh, he visited his mother's relatives; and in the early 1790s, he married a Scottish cousin, Lydia Laurie. They had one daughter, named for her mother, who lived only a few years as did Mrs. Meriwether; they both were buried in Scotland.

Following these misfortunes, Charles returned to Virginia. In 1800 he married Nancy Minor (1781-1801), daughter of Dabney and Ann Anderson Minor. A son, Charles Nicholas, was born to them in August 1801. Death claimed the mother shortly thereafter.

Approximately seven years later, the doctor married again. His third wife was Mary Walton Daniel, a Virginia widow. They were the parents of two children, William Douglas (1809-1885), and James Hunter (1814-1890).

In 1809 Charles and Mary moved to Guthrie, Kentucky, a small town located near the Kentucky-Tennessee state line, and they settled on a farm consisting of about 1600 acres. A year later, they built a commodious brick house on the farm and named it "Meriville." It was still in the possession of the Meriwether family as late as 1964.

II. Caroline Ferguson (Gordon) Tate

James Morris Gordon and Nancy Minor Meriwether Gordon were the parents of Caroline Ferguson Gordon (6 October 1895 – 11 April 1981), who was born near Trenton in Todd County, Kentucky. She was educated at Bethany College, Bethany, West Virginia, receiving a B.A. degree in 1912. Caroline married John Orley Allen Tate in 1924, and their daughter, Nancy Minor Meriwether, was born the next year. John and Caroline divorced in 1959.

Caroline was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in 1932 and received second place in the O. Henry Memorial Awards in 1934. She filled the positions of reporter, professor, lecturer,

and author during her career. Among her writings were the following books: *Penhally*, 1931; *Aleck Maury*, *Sportsman*, 1934; *None Shall Look Back*, 1937; *The Garden of Adonis*, 1937; *Green Centuries*, 1941; *The Woman on the Porch*, 1944; *The Forest of the South*, 1945; *The Strange Children*, 1951; *Old Red and Other Stories*, 1954; *The Malefactors*, 1956; and *How to Read a Novel*, 1957.

### III. Elizabeth (Meriwether) Gilmer

Elizabeth Meriwether was born on 18 November 1861, on a farm named “Woodstock,” which was located partially in Kentucky and partially in Tennessee; yet, Tennessee can rightfully claim her as a native daughter since the house was located in Montgomery County, Tennessee. After a few years, the family’s financial burdens forced them to leave the farm and to move to Clarksville, Tennessee, where Elizabeth attended The Female Academy. Graduating from the Academy at age sixteen, she attended Hollins Institute in Virginia for six months. Elizabeth won the annual composition medal while at Hollins, and this event really marked the beginning of her writing career.

In 1882 Elizabeth married her step-mother’s brother, George O. Gilmer, who was ten years her elder. Shortly after her marriage, she realized that her husband was unable to retain a job and that he was emotionally unstable; nevertheless, she tried to help him overcome both problems. He never improved for any length of time, and it became necessary for Elizabeth to be the family’s provider.

After having some short stories accepted by newspapers for publication, Elizabeth began writing for the *New Orleans Picayune* in 1896. She soon became editor of the Women’s Department and inaugurated her advice column. It was during this period that she assumed the pseudonym “Dorothy Dix,” which name she used exclusively from then on, even signing her name as “Dolly” on occasions. In 1901 she joined the *New York Journal* as a staff writer specializing in the coverage of murder trials; but she continued writing her advice columns which were syndicated and published throughout the United States. In 1917 she returned to her beloved New Orleans. Gilmer continued to write her columns until 1949. In addition, she wrote the following books: *Mirandy Exhorts*, 1922; *My Trip Around the World*, 1924; and *Dorothy Dix - Her Book: Everyday Help for Everyday People*, 1926. After being hospitalized for many months, Gilmer died on 16 December 1951, and was buried in New Orleans.

#### Bibliographical Notes

- Kane, Harnett T. *Dear Dorothy Dix*, 1952.  
Meriwether, Nelson Heath. *The Meriwethers and Their Connections*, 1964.  
*Who’s Who in America*, 1950.

## COLLECTION NOTE

The collection is comprised chiefly of letters to and from various members of the Meriwether family. The papers (typescripts) of Charles Meriwether are the earliest ones, dating from 1791 to 1870, and include incoming letters (32), deeds for land in Christian County, Kentucky, and Montgomery County, Tennessee, as well as Montgomery County tax receipts, surveys, and genealogical material.

Tate's papers, 1938-1947, are mainly her letters (originals, 14) to various relatives which contain family news, World War II experiences, and accounts of professional activities. Included in the collection are the 1944 wedding invitation of Nancy Tate, Caroline's daughter, and a 1941 clipping of a review of Tate's book, *Green Centuries*.

Gilmer's family letters, 1930-1949, (originals, 13) are addressed mostly to her cousin, Mrs. Ross McCuddy of Adairville, Kentucky. (McCuddy was related to each of the individuals mentioned as is noted on a genealogical chart included in the collection.)

## SHELF LIST

### BOX 1

Folder 1	Papers (typed copies) chiefly of Charles Meriwether	1791-1870	44 items
	1a - Incoming letters to Charles	1791-1795	4 items
	1b - Incoming letters to Charles	1808-1843	18 items
	1c - Incoming correspondence to Charles from his brother, William Douglas	1809-1840	8 items
	1d - Miscellaneous letters	1852; 1870	2 items
	1e - Montgomery County, Tennessee, tax receipts	1809; 1811	2 items
	1f - Christian County deeds	1810; 1816; 1819	3 items
	1g - Montgomery County, Tennessee, deeds and surveys	1811; 1825	4 items
	1h - List of negroes given to W. D. Meriwether by his father, Charles	1830	1 item
	1i - Meriwether genealogy	n.d.	2 items
	1j - Meriwether family genealogical chart	n.d.	1 item
Folder 2	Caroline (Gordon) Tate Papers	1938-1947	18 items
	2a - Letters		
	2b - Letters of friends or relatives which mention the Tates	1941-1944	14 items

	2c - Wedding announcement of Nancy Tate to Percy H. Wood, Jr.	1944	2 items
	2d - Clipping of book reviews of <i>Green Centuries</i>	1941	1 item
Folder 3	Dorothy Dix Letters – Letters chiefly to Mrs. Ross McCuddy, a cousin	1930-1949	13 items

### **BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

MSS MERIWETHER Family Papers 1791-1949  
44

Typed copies of personal and legal papers, 1791-1840 (43) of Charles Meriwether, a pioneer doctor of Christian County, Kentucky; family letters of Caroline Gordon Tate, author and educator, 1938-1947 (18); and family letters of newspaper columnist Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer (“Dorothy Dix”), 1930-1949 (13).

½ box. 3 folders. 74 items. Originals and typescripts.

1953.9.2

### **SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

African Americans – Attitude towards – Early 1940s	F2a
Arkansas Territory – Description and travel, 1818, 1823	F1b
Authors and publishers – 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	F2a
Authors – Kentucky – Tate, Caroline Ferguson (Gordon), 1895-1981	F2a
Authors – Tennessee – Gilmer, Elizabeth (Meriwether), 1861-1951	F3
Christian County – Deeds, 1810, 1816, 1819	F1f
Economic conditions – Virginia, 1808-1840	F1b,1c
Farms and farming – Virginia, 1816-1840	F1c
Genealogy – Gordon family	F2a
Genealogy – Meriwether family	F1i,1j
Gilmer, Elizabeth (Meriwether), 1861-1951	F3
Indians – Attitude towards, 1823	F1b
Lee, Robert Edward, 1807-1870 – Funeral of	F1d
Lytle, Andrew Nelson, 1902-1995 – Relating to	F2a
MacLeish, Archibald, 1892-1982 – Relating to	F2a
Meriwether, Charles, 1766-1843	F1
Mississippi River – Travel and description, 1818	F1b
Poets	F2a

Rivers – Arkansas, 1818, 1823 F1b  
Stevens, Wallace, 1879-1955 – Relating to F2a  
Tate, Allen John Orley, 1899-1979 – Relating to, 1940-1947 F2  
Tate, Caroline Ferguson (Gordon), 1895-1981 F2  
Montgomery County, Tennessee – Deeds, 1811, 1825 F1g  
Montgomery County, Tennessee – Surveys, 1851, 1860 F1g  
Montgomery County, Tennessee – Tax receipts, 1809, 1811 F1e  
Tobacco – Trade – Virginia, 1808-1840 F1b,1c  
World War II, 1939-1945 – Public opinion F2b

Jeffrey 05/30/2012