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## Edmunds Family Papers (MSS 443)

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*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 443    EDMUNDS Family Papers**

1 box. 20 folders. 359 items. 1813-1952. Originals, typescripts.

1998.145.1

***BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE***

The family of William Ewan Cameron (1792-1827) was one of the wealthiest and largest owners of land and slaves in antebellum North Carolina. In 1813, William married Anne Call (1795-1856), daughter of Daniel Call and Elizabeth Taliaferro. Among William and Anne's children were Anna Mary Cameron (1817-1890), who married Alexander McKenzie Kirkland; Rebecca Taliaferro Cameron (1827-1857), who married Benjamin C. Edmunds; and Mary Read Cameron (1823-1864), who in 1839 married William Howell Edmunds (1815-1862), of Halifax County, North Carolina, the son of Benjamin A. Edmunds and Mary (Turner) Edmunds.

After her husband's death, Anne (Call) Cameron took legal steps to arrange the administration of her property, which included land and slaves given to her by her father under a marriage settlement, and its eventual distribution to her children. Her son-in-law William H. Edmunds came to play a primary role as trustee and manager of Anne's holdings in Virginia and Kentucky. An attorney by profession, William acted as her agent in the purchase and sale of land, the hiring out of slaves, and the collection of income from various investments.

In 1842, Anne conveyed to William more than 900 acres of land on the Cumberland River in Caldwell County, Kentucky, and William eventually moved his family from North Carolina to Princeton, Kentucky. In the years leading up to the Civil War, however, he spent much time away from home developing the farm as well as practicing law. He also represented Caldwell County in the Kentucky House of Representatives where, as a foe of abolition and a supporter of states' rights, he found his loyalty to the Union called into question.

William H. Edmunds and Mary (Cameron) Edmunds' children included: Charles Benjamin Edmunds (1846-1917); Augustus Edmunds (1849-1861); William Livingston Edmunds (1853-1903); Mary "Mollie" Cameron Edmunds (1858-1933), who married William A. Peay; Walter Augustus Edmunds (1861-1926) and Eliza "Lizzie" Cameron Edmunds (1843-1886). In 1859, Lizzie Edmunds was sent to a private school operated by Protestant Episcopal bishop Benjamin B. Smith at his home, "Kalorama," near Louisville. In 1860, she was enrolled at Patapsco Institute in Ellicott City, Maryland, but was brought home in spring 1861 at the outbreak of the Civil War. The war years were traumatic for Lizzie. Early in 1861, her brother Augustus became ill and died while she was still at school in Maryland. In October 1862, her father William was on a business trip aboard the steamer "Nashville" en route to Evansville, Indiana,

when a guerilla on the riverbank shot and killed him. Lizzie's mother Mary died in 1864, leaving her brother Charles to manage the family farm and Lizzie to care for her younger siblings.

In 1866, Lizzie married Samuel Fox McNary (1827-1891). Their children included Anna Edmunds McNary (1876-1966), who married Hiram Nuckols; and Mary Louise McNary (1879-1944), who married Thomas F. Short.

### **COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection contains correspondence and other personal papers of the Edmunds family of North Carolina and Caldwell County, Kentucky, and of related families, principally the Cameron family of North Carolina. Much of the material relates to William H. Edmunds, his wife Mary Read (Cameron) Edmunds, and their daughter Eliza "Lizzie" Cameron Edmunds.

Folder 1 contains the collection inventory and a few family notes providing brief background information on some of the correspondence.

Folder 2 contains documents relating to the land and slaves of Anne (Call) Cameron, her distribution of property to her children, and the management of her property by her son-in-law, William H. Edmunds. Included is an 1813 contract and related deeds settling property upon Anne at her marriage, Anne's 1841 agreement to convey land and slaves to her children, and an 1844 trust deed from Anne conveying land and slaves in Kentucky and Virginia to William H. Edmunds, to be administered for her benefit during her life and distributed to her daughters on her death.

Folder 3 contains mostly letters of William H. Edmunds' father Benjamin A. Edmunds. Writing from North Carolina to his son in Kentucky, Benjamin discusses his health and crops and gives news of other family members. Also included is a deed from Benjamin to William of land in North Carolina, and accounts relating to Benjamin's estate.

Folder 4 contains general correspondence of William H. Edmunds. Included are letters from Anne (Call) Cameron relating to her family and the administration of her property, and letters relating to the education and care of William's daughter Eliza ("Lizzie"). Of interest is an 1851 letter from William to his children in which he describes the new farm in Kentucky where he plans to resettle the family, and a lengthy 1857 letter to an unknown addressee in which William defends slavery and decries the North's attempts, with the financial backing of England, to curtail the institution and dominate the South.

Folder 5 contains William H. Edmunds' letters to his wife Mary Read (Cameron) Edmunds, including one written before their marriage. Addressed to Mary in North Carolina and later in Kentucky, they concern members of her family and his burdensome duties in ensuring their welfare, particularly that of Anne (Call) Cameron and her daughter Rebecca ("Beck"), whose chronic ill health was a frequent issue. William also discusses the development of his farm in Caldwell County—acreage, crops and the construction of slave cabins—and notes that slaves brought to the farm by his brother James complained when new restrictions were placed on their movement and liquor consumption. As the Civil War ensues, he writes from Frankfort, where he is serving in the House of Representatives, warning Mary of difficult times ahead and fearing that their property in Kentucky will be exposed to attack.

Folder 6 contains miscellaneous papers relating mostly to William H. Edmunds. Included are deeds of land and slaves; notes relating to the hiring out of slaves; William's declaration of his migration from Halifax County, North Carolina to Caldwell County, Kentucky in 1848; a

tuition receipt for his daughter Lizzie's education; a Civil War-era pass; and various receipts and accounts of William and his wife. Of interest is a record of payment by William's brother James for fees in connection with a charge of disturbing the peace made against his slave "Harriet," and a clipping memorializing William Edmunds on his death at the hands of guerrillas.

Folder 7 contains mostly Civil War-era political speeches and declarations of William H. Edmunds, although some are unsigned and must be presumed to be his work. As a professed "states rights democrat," he supports state sovereignty and deplores abolitionism and the North's economic domination of the South, but favors preservation of the Union. He also defends himself against charges of disloyalty made in 1862 during his service in the Kentucky House of Representatives. (It is notable, however, that family members refer to William's support of secession in various letters in this collection.)

Folder 8 contains miscellaneous papers of William H. Edmunds' brother, Benjamin C. Edmunds. Included are accounts relating to financial transactions with William, and deeds for the purchase and sale of slaves by Benjamin.

Folder 9 contains correspondence, mostly with family, of Mary Read (Cameron) Edmunds. It begins shortly before her marriage, with letters of advice from her mother, and her mother's subsequent letters convey mostly family news. Mary's sister Rebecca Taliaferro Cameron (who married Benjamin C. Edmunds, the brother of Mary's husband), writes of her daughter's birth and baptism, and another sister conveys news of their mother's death. Included is correspondence between Mary and her niece Sarah Rebecca Cameron ("Sally Bec," the daughter of her brother William E. Cameron), in which Mary writes about her children and of a severe burn to her hand, and Sarah supplies family news from North Carolina. Mary also tells Sarah of the trauma her daughter Lizzie experienced as she was brought home from Patapsco Institute at the outbreak of the Civil War; the same letter contains Mary's declaration that her family, including her husband, are strong secessionists. Mary receives letters of condolence on the death of her son Augustus in 1861, and of her husband William in 1862. A witness writes to explain the circumstances of William's death, and condolences also come from a cousin, Minnie Anderson, whose husband, Confederate Brigadier General George B. Anderson, had recently died from wounds suffered at Antietam. Other correspondence relates to daughter Lizzie's needs at school, including the provision of mourning clothes after the death of her brother Augustus.

Folder 10 contains correspondence of Eliza C. "Lizzie" Cameron Edmunds. Almost all the letters in this folder were written to or by Lizzie in 1859 while she was a student at Bishop Benjamin B. Smith's school. The most frequent correspondents are her mother and father, her aunt Anna (Cameron) Kirkland, and her brother Augustus. Subjects discussed include Lizzie's studies and her clothing needs, the activities of her family and siblings, especially her infant sister Mary ("Mollie"), her father's health and absences at their farm, and local news of Princeton, Kentucky, including outbreaks of scarlet fever. Everyone is solicitous of Lizzie's needs and welfare; her parents urge her not to undermine her health with strenuous exercise or study, and her mother, while delivering critiques of her spelling, discourages her from writing letters on the Sabbath.

Folder 11 contains letters written to or by Lizzie Cameron Edmunds from 1860-1861 while she was a student at Patapsco Institute in Ellicott City, Maryland. Most of the correspondence is with her father and mother, but also with her brothers Charles and Augustus and her aunt, Anna Kirkland. Events covered in the correspondence include her studies, the

birth of another brother, Walter, the construction of an icehouse at home, and the family's heartbreak when Augustus becomes ill and dies. The letters also reflect the family's anxiety at the onset of the Civil War; Lizzie's father fears that the North will "enslave" them, and her brother Charles writes that they are "redhot Secessionists." Her parents anticipate the difficulty in bringing Lizzie home from school due to her father's political preoccupations and the lack of money caused by bank closures.

Folder 12 contains further correspondence of Lizzie Cameron Edmunds from 1862-1872, a period which saw the deaths of her parents and her marriage to Samuel F. McNary. Correspondents include her brother Charles and aunt Anna Kirkland; the latter is residing in the North Carolina Asylum, where she appears to be suffering from depression. Lizzie's former schoolmaster Bishop Smith and members of the McNary family write letters of consolation on the deaths of her parents, and Robert H. Archer, principal of Patapsco Institute, writes to update her on the condition of her former school after the Civil War.

Folder 13 contains a marriage announcement and a few letters to Lizzie Cameron Edmunds from her mother and brother, undated but most likely written to her at school. Folder 14 contains compositions written by Lizzie Cameron Edmunds while a student. Folder 15 contains correspondence of Lizzie Cameron Edmunds with friends and schoolmates from Bishop Smith's school and Patapsco Institute. One describes their departure from Patapsco in spring 1861; another writes from Paducah of military activities and political sentiments, and asks Lizzie, one of the last students to leave school, to retrieve some personal property left behind. Still another mourns for Maryland, "under the iron rule of the hateful tyrant Lincoln." They also write of their studies, news and gossip. Folder 16 contains miscellaneous accounts for clothing and school supplies of Lizzie Cameron Edmunds, and an announcement regarding her opening of an art class after her marriage.

Folder 17 contains notes and correspondence regarding the genealogy of the Edmunds and related families. Folder 18 contains wills of William H. Edmunds, Mary R. Edmunds, and an ancestor, Charles Edmunds. Folder 19 contains Civil War-era currency of the Confederate States and banks in South Carolina and Georgia.

Folder 20 contains miscellaneous letters and papers, some of which cannot be fully identified, relating to the Edmunds and Cameron families. Of interest is a letter from Lizzie Cameron Edmunds' brother Charles to an unnamed cousin, in which he discusses Kentucky's political divisions at the outbreak of the Civil War, relates Lizzie's narrow "escape" from Patapsco Institute and then Alexandria, Virginia ahead of Federal troops, and tells of the wedding of their servant, Vick Edmunds. Another correspondent writes Lizzie's brother William about seeing Confederate prisoners in Louisville in 1863.

## ***SHELF LIST***

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>Edmunds Family Papers</b>	<b>1813-1952</b>	<b>359 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory and notes		23 items
Folder 2	Anne (Call) Cameron – Property and settlement documents	1813-1849	12 items

Folder 3	Benjamin A. Edmunds – Letters and deed to William H. Edmunds; estate accounts	1845-1857	6 items
Folder 4	William H. Edmunds – Correspondence	1838-1862, n.d.	18 items
Folder 5	William H. Edmunds – Letters to Mary Read (Cameron) Edmunds	1838-1862	16 items
Folder 6	William H. Edmunds and Mary Read (Cameron) Edmunds – Miscellaneous deeds, receipts, papers	1841-1865, n.d.	54 items
Folder 7	William H. Edmunds – Speeches	1862, n.d.	12 items
Folder 8	Benjamin C. Edmunds – Miscellaneous papers	1843-1846	7 items
Folder 9	Mary Read (Cameron) Edmunds – Correspondence	1836-1862, n.d.	33 items
Folder 10	Eliza “Lizzie” C. Edmunds – Correspondence	1850-1859	57 items
Folder 11	Eliza “Lizzie” C. Edmunds – Correspondence	1860-1861	40 items
Folder 12	Eliza “Lizzie” C. Edmunds – Correspondence	1862-1872	10 items
Folder 13	Eliza “Lizzie” C. Edmunds – Correspondence	1866, n.d.	6 items
Folder 14	Eliza “Lizzie” C. Edmunds – School compositions	1859, n.d.	9 items
Folder 15	Eliza “Lizzie” C. Edmunds – Correspondence with friends and schoolmates	1860-1861	9 items
Folder 16	Eliza “Lizzie” C. Edmunds – Miscellaneous accounts; art class announcement	1860-1882	8 items
Folder 17	Edmunds family – Notes and genealogical data	1905-1932, n.d.	6 items
Folder 18	Edmunds family wills	1827-1851, n.d.	3 items
Folder 19	Currency of Confederate States of America and Southern banks	1851-1864, n.d.	7 items
Folder 20	Miscellaneous family papers and letters	1823-1952, n.d.	23 items

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

MSS EDMUNDS Family Papers 1813-1952  
443

Correspondence, deeds, legal and other personal papers of the Edmunds family of North Carolina and Caldwell County, Kentucky. Includes genealogical data and papers of associated families, primarily the Cameron family of North Carolina.

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 Edmunds, Mary Read (Cameron), 1823-1864 – Correspondence B1,F3,5,9-11,13  
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