

Collection #
M 1132

MARY MYERS DAVIS LETTERS
CA. 1871–1892, 1950

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 half-size manuscript box

COLLECTION DATES: ca. 1871–1892, 1950

PROVENANCE: Rodney O. Davis, 2014

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2014.0173

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

For at least thirty years Samuel Myers (1809-1878) lived outside Fairbanks, Sullivan County, Indiana, where he was a tanner, miller, farmer, and something of a community pillar. Why he chose to move to western Missouri with two of his sons after the Civil War is not known. He was sixty years old, and with the exception of a crippled youngest son his seven surviving children were grown and self-supporting. He was, to all appearances, financially secure, and a hard-working, careful conservatism was his most obvious personal attribute.

The extant Myers family correspondence reveals no particular reason for Samuel's move west so late in life, but a few surrounding circumstances provide some clues. The Civil War years brought great personal sadness to the family. Five of the seven Myers sons joined the 43rd Indiana Infantry during the conflict. William Nelson, Charles, Lewis, and George joined in 1861; Samuel Barnes in 1864. Lewis died on October 28, 1863, while with the 43rd at Little Rock, Arkansas, leaving a wife and small daughter. John Levi, the only one of Samuel's grown sons who did not enlist, died five days later in Fairbanks of unknown causes. The remaining four men served until June, 1865.

Of the Myers land buyers, Samuel, his wife, Margaret (1816-1892), and their crippled son, Milton (1858-1877), apparently made the initial move to Vernon County along with Nelson and his wife, Lucy, and Barnes. Charles remained in Sullivan with his wife, Isabel (Bell), and their growing family, as did the Myers daughters, Margaret, or Maggie (1852-1943), who married Jacob Harris in the summer of 1869 while her family was preparing to depart, and Mary (1846-1932), who had married John Davis earlier. Of another son, George (1834-1908), much less is known, for no letters to or from him survive although he is occasionally mentioned in the correspondence.

The Myers family letters were discovered in 1984 in Newton, Kansas, in a family trunk that had belonged to Mary Myers Davis. They were augmented in the spring of 1986 by copies of other letters in the possession of Mrs. Clella Kelley of Ralston, Oklahoma, a granddaughter of Margaret Myers Harris. The letters were written back and forth between the Myers parents and their children, all of whom eventually left Sullivan County for such destinations as Missouri, central and western Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma Territory—and among the children. The women of the extended family were especially sensitive to the loss of physical proximity, and they were very concerned about staying in touch, however frustrated they were about the limits of the written, as opposed to the spoken, word. About twenty-two years are covered by the letters, by the end of which time the family's dispersal was complete. There is also a birthday card from 1950 that belonged to one of the grandchildren of Samuel and Margaret Myers.

Sources:

"A Hoosier Family Moves West, 1868–1895, Parts I & II," *Indiana Magazine of History*, March & June 1990.

Link Part 1: <http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/11030>

Link Part 2: <http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/11052>

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The bulk of the Mary Myers Davis family letters spans about twenty-two years, from about 1871 until about 1892. An additional birthday card sent to Prudence Harris, one of the grandchildren is dated 1950. The collection is organized based on which family member the correspondence was from.

Many of the letters have a typed transcription along with them.

Series one consists of twenty letters, spanning the years 1871 to 1889, from the mother, Margaret Myers to her daughter Mary Myers Davis.

Series two consists of four letters from the father, Samuel Myers to Mary Myers Davis and her husband John. These letters are from 1876 to 1877.

Series three consists of ten letters to Mary Myers Davis from her youngest brother Milton, who was disabled and lived with their parents. A couple of the letters also have an additional letter to Mary from Margaret and Maggie, Mary's sister. These letters span the years 1871 to 1876.

Series four consists of eleven letters from sister, Margaret (Maggie) Myers Harris to Mary Myers Davis. These letters span the years 1880 to 1891.

Series five consists of four letters and a transcription of another letter from brother, Samuel Barnes Myers and his wife Martha (Clem) Reynolds Myers to Mary Myers Davis. These letters date from 1877 to 1881.

Series six consists of six letters and three postcards from brother, William Nelson (Nels) and Lucy Davenport Myers to Mary Myers Davis. These letters and postcards are all from 1892, the year Margaret Myers died.

Series seven consists of two letters to Margaret Myers from her children, Nels and Barnes (Samuel). They are both from 1880.

Series eight consists of five letters to Mary Myers Davis from various other family members. These date from 1879 to 1891.

Series nine consists of a letter, a birthday card, and copies of two letters. These date from 1879 to 1950.

**Dates in brackets in the Series Content were taken from the research and articles of Prof. Rodney O. Davis. "A Hoosier Family Moves West, 1868–1895, Parts I & II," *Indiana Magazine of History*, March & June 1990.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Correspondence from Margaret Myers to Mary Myers Davis, ca. 1871–1889

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Letter (last part cut off) and transcription, 28 May 1871	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 19 April 1872	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 27 August 1876	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 23 December [1877]	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, [Spring 1878]	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 13 July [1878]	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 19 May 1879	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 10 March [1880]	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, March [1881]	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 4 September 1881	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, February [1882]	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 16 May 1882	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 21 December 1884	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 20 July 1888	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 14 March 1889	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 5 May 1889	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 5 November 1809 [1889]	Box 1, Folder 1

Letter and transcription, 17 November 1889	Box 1, Folder 1
Letter and transcription, 16 March n.d.	Box 1, Folder 1
Partial letter and transcription, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 1

Series 2: Correspondence from Samuel Myers to John and Mary (Myers) Davis, ca. 1876–1877

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Letter to Mary Myers Davis and Margaret Myers Harris and transcription, 14 October 1876	Box 1, Folder 2
Letter and transcription, 23 March 1877	Box 1, Folder 2
Letter and transcription, [Spring 1877]	Box 1, Folder 2
Letters to Mary and John Davis and transcription, 17 September 1877	Box 1, Folder 2

Series 3: Correspondence from Milton Myers to Mary Myers Davis, ca. 1871–1876

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Letter (corner missing), 15 November 1871	Box 1, Folder 3
Letters and transcription from Milton and Margaret, 19 January 1873	Box 1, Folder 3
Letter (with tear), 14 April 1873	Box 1, Folder 3
Letter, 27 March 1874	Box 1, Folder 3
Letters from Milton and Maggie, 18 July 1874	Box 1, Folder 3
Letter, 4 July 1875	Box 1, Folder 3
Letter, 21 October 1875	Box 1, Folder 3
Letter, 25 November 1875	Box 1, Folder 3
Letter, 19 March 1876	Box 1, Folder 3
Letter, 23 April 1876	Box 1, Folder 3

Series 4: Correspondence from Margaret (Maggie) Myers Harris to Mary Myers Davis, ca. 1880–1891

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Letter, 8 October [1880]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter, 7 November [1880]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter and transcription, 30 July [1881]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter, 5 December [1880–1883]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter, March [1883]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter, [1886]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter, 21 December [1886]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter, 12 January [1887]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter, 13 April [1889]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter, 13 October [1889]	Box 1, Folder 4
Letter, 14 March [1891]	Box 1, Folder 4

Series 5: Correspondence from Barnes & Clem Myer to Mary Myers Davis, ca. 1877–1881

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Letter and transcription, [Fall 1877]	Box 1, Folder 5
Letter and transcription, 9 March 1878	Box 1, Folder 5
Letter and transcription, 16 June [1878]	Box 1, Folder 5
Transcription of a letter, 11 March 1880	Box 1, Folder 5
Letter and transcription, 14 April 1881	Box 1, Folder 5

Series 6: Correspondence from William Nelson (Nels) & Lucy Myer to Mary Myers Davis, ca. 1892

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Letter and transcription, 8 January 1892	Box 1, Folder 6

Letter and transcription, 12 January 1892	Box 1, Folder 6
Letter and transcription, 14 January 1892	Box 1, Folder 6
Letter and transcription, 16 January 1892	Box 1, Folder 6
Postcard and transcription, 18 January 1892	Box 1, Folder 6
Postcard and transcription, 19 January 1892	Box 1, Folder 6
Postcard and transcription, 20 January 1892	Box 1, Folder 6
Letter and transcription, 25 January 1892	Box 1, Folder 6
Letter and transcription, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 6

Series 7: Correspondence from her children to Margaret Myers, ca. 1880

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Letter and transcription, 27 June 1880	Box 1, Folder 7
Letter and transcription, 14 July 1880	Box 1, Folder 7

Series 8: Correspondence from other family members to Mary Myers Davis, ca. 1879–1891

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Letter to Mary Myers Davis from Bell Myers, August 1879	Box 1, Folder 8
Letter to Aunt Mary Davis and Charley from Florence Harris, [1882–1883]	Box 1, Folder 8
Letter to Aunt Mary Davis and son Homer from Florence Harris, 18 May 1888	Box 1, Folder 8
Letter to Aunt Mary and Homer Davis from Florence Harris, 11 April 1891	Box 1, Folder 8
Letter to Aunt Mary Davis from Prudence Harris, 28 November 1891	Box 1, Folder 8

Series 9: Misc. Correspondence of the Myer Family

CONTENTS

Letter and transcription, written by Clem to Sue
(probably Susan Drake of Fairbanks), 21 July 1879

Copy of a letter from Maggie, n.d. ("Kelley letters")

Copy of letter to Mother, probably Margaret Myers
probably from son, Charles Myers, 20 January 1891
("Kelley letters")

Birthday card in envelope found in "Miller Family
Bible" from Mrs. Harley Clabaugh to Miss Prudence
Harris, Oklahoma, postmark 13 October 1950

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 9

Box 1, Folder 9

Box 1, Folder 9

Box 1, Folder 9

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 1132).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.