

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA



OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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AD 250 * MOBILE, ALABAMA 36688Contact: Jennifer Z. Ekman, jekman@usouthal.edu, (251) 460-6360 May 6, 2011**McCall Family Gives Massive Historic Archival Collection to USA*****USA Archives to be Renamed “The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library”***

The University of South Alabama today announced it has received a gift of a massive, historically important archival collection of more than one million documents from the early days of Alabama statehood to the Civil War and up to the early 20th Century.

The Doy Leale McCall Collection, a gift from the McCall family, is appraised at some \$3.1 million and features historical documents related to Alabama and the Black Belt, including:

- plantation documents;
- letters from prominent national figures such as Jefferson Davis, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Raphael Semmes, P.G.T. Beauregard and William Jennings Bryan;
- land grants signed by U.S. presidents;
- books and diaries;
- papers of Alabama’s third governor, Israel Pickens, including substantial materials related to the Marquis de Lafayette’s visit to Alabama in 1825;
- sheet music;
- numerous pieces of correspondence from Alabama notables such as James Dellet, Sam Dale, Clement Comer Clay, William Rufus King, Henry Hitchcock, John Tyler Morgan and Daniel Pratt; and,
- personal letters and diaries generated during the Civil War, many of which have formed the basis of earlier published work.

In recognition of the gift from the McCall family, the University will rename the USA Archives in memory of Doy Leale McCall, who collected half of the antebellum manuscripts in the collection. The remaining half of the collection consists of Alabama-related manuscripts and

records generated by forbearers to the present McCall family, with materials dating from the late 18th century to the early 20th century.

“The McCall family has given the University a wonderful treasure that underscores the institution’s role as an interpreter and preserver of our history and culture, as well as provides our faculty, our students and historians from around the world an opportunity for unique research and scholarship,” said USA President Gordon Moulton.

“We are honored that the McCall family put its trust in USA with this important gift, and we look forward to sharing the discoveries in the collection in the years to come.”

The current USA Archives will be renamed “The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library” and will be moved from the Springhill Avenue campus to the USA main campus in the near future. The massive collection will take time to organize. It will be opened to the public, in sections, as it is processed over the next few years.

Doy Leale McCall was the late grandfather of Doy Leale McCall III, Margaret McCall Rolfsen and John Peter Crook McCall, three siblings who donated the collection to USA.

Speaking for his family, Mobile attorney John McCall said he was happy the collection would be archived by professionals at USA for use by scholars, historians and the general public.

“Everyone in the family recognized that the collection needed to be placed in the public domain. We are very pleased and excited that these materials will now be available for research and scholarship, and we are particularly pleased that the collection will be housed in Mobile here at USA,” John McCall said.

USA Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Dr. Joseph Busta said of the gift, “The McCall collection is one of the most important gifts ever given to immediately and significantly enhance the scholarship and academic reputation of the University of South Alabama.”

USA’s archivist Carol Ellis said the collection has been a fascinating discovery for her as she and a team of staff and students begin to process the huge trove of documents. Much of the collection came to the library in century-old steamer trunks where archivists discovered antebellum records that had remained undisturbed for over 150 years.

“The Doy Leale McCall collection of materials on the Alabama Black Belt will raise the profile of the USA archives and give current and future students, as well as historians, a fresh look at the history of our state during its formative years and into the 20th century,” Ellis said. “We hope the contribution of these papers will encourage others to make available similar collections currently in private hands.”

Dr. David Alsobrook, who is director of the Museum of Mobile and previously worked at several Presidential libraries, said the McCall collection will offer new insights for historians of the Jacksonian era and the Civil War.

“The McCall collection cuts a wide swath through U.S. and Southern history--from the antebellum era through the early 20th century,” he said. “Perhaps the most obvious value of the entire McCall collection is that these comprehensive family papers will allow scholars to examine the historic fabric as a whole -- politics, financial affairs, culture, personal relationships, etc. For Civil War scholars, this collection will be a treasure trove.”

Dr. Mel McKiven, USA associate professor of history and a 19th century expert who has previewed the collection, said it contains letters and other documents that will greatly expand scholars’ understanding of the political, social, economic, and cultural development of 19th century Alabama. He also noted that USA students involved in processing the collection will have a unique historical and archival experience.

“The McCall collection may be the largest single collection of 19th century private family correspondence and business records in the state. When fully processed, it may be one of the largest collections of primary source documents about Alabama in the region, if not the nation,” he said. “Professional historians, students, and others doing research on Alabama, the South, and the United States generally during the 19th century will certainly want to examine the holdings of this collection.”

Baylor University history Professor Dr. Michael Parrish, who appraised the McCall collection, said, “The Doy Leale McCall collection is one of the finest archives of Southern history ever discovered. Every serious scholar who focuses on the tumultuous 19th century will want to utilize the collection's rich and unique sources. By rendering such a generous donation to the University of South Alabama, the McCall family has made a truly superb contribution to Southern culture and education.”

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