FINDING AID TO THE INTERNATIONAL, LIBRARY, ARCHIVES & MUSEUM OF OPTOMETRY COLLECTION ON THE McALLISTER FAMILY OF PHILADELPHIA

COLLECTION SUMMARY

COLLECTION NUMBER: MSS 501.01 US-MOSIAMO

REPOSITORY: THE ARCHIVES & MUSEUM OF OPTOMETRY
243 NORTH LINDBERGH BOULEVARD
St. Louis, MO 63141
EMAIL: AMO@AOA.ORG
PHONE: 800.365.2219 ext. 4136
FAX: 314.991.4101

COLLECTION TITLE: THE ILAMO COLLECTION ON THE McALLISTER FAMILY OF PHILADELPHIA

DATES OF CREATION: 1822-1987 (INCLUSIVE)

DATES OF ACCUMULATION: 1969-1987

EXTENT: 1.2 CUBIC FEET OF TEXTUAL MATERIAL INCLUDING 5 Oversize letters documents, 22 PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS, 130 SLIDES, AND 14 TEST CARDS FOR OPTICAL INSTRUMENT

NAME OF COLLECTOR: INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY, ARCHIVES & MUSEUM OF OPTOMETRY
MARIA DABLEMONT, HEAD LIBRARIAN

Finding Aid to the International, Library, Archives & Museum of Optometry
Collection on the McAllister Family of Philadelphia

Philadelphia, PA in 1969 and a presentation to Wills Eye Hospital in 1985. The collection was retained for use by researchers at the International Library, Archives & Museum of Optometry (ILAMO) at its founding in 1972. Dablemont continued to add material to the collection until her retirement in 1988. The McAllister family of Philadelphia is significant to optometry history because male members of the family were believed to be the first refracting opticians or optometrists in the United States and founding members of the American Optometric Association.

Content and Structure

Scope and Content: The majority of this collection is comprised of correspondence between ILAMO staff and researchers. Letter attachments include publications, photocopies of collected articles from historical journals and photocopies of original primary sources from other repositories and private collections. Also included in this collection are the results of research including publications or manuscripts, slide presentations and photographs. A small number of original manuscripts, correspondence, and ephemera dating from the early 19th and 20th centuries is also held in this collection.

The materials in this collection relate to the activities five generations of McAllister men who practiced as optometrists and opticians in Philadelphia, PA, New York, NY and Baltimore, MD and made significant contributions to the improvement and innovation in clinical care, professional advocacy and educational standards.

John McAllister, Sr. (1753-1830) immigrated to New York City in 1775 from Scotland. Trained as a woodworker, McAllister opened a business manufacturing whips and canes in 1783 on Philadelphia’s Market Street. In 1796, he moved his business to 48 Chestnut Street and purchased a lot of hardware that included a small inventory of spectacles. Optical devices, instruments and, later, photographic equipment soon became his
MAIN LINE OF MERCHANDISE AND HE AND HIS DESCENDANTS BECAME SKILLED
OPTICIANS AND VISION CARE PROFESSIONALS EMPLOYED IN REFRACTION OF THE EYE,
DIAGNOSIS OF VISUAL ANOMALIES, AND PRESCRIPTION AND FITTING OF CORRECTIVE
SPECTACLES.

McAllister provided vision care to U.S. presidents and notable members
of the Washington and Philadelphia elite during the early part of the
century, providing spectacles and specialized lenses to George
Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, among others.

His eldest son, John McAllister, Jr. (1786-1877), joined his father in
business in 1811 after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania.
McAllister and Sons are credited with the first prescription of
cylindrical lenses for the treatment of astigmatism in the United States
to Reverend Chauncey E. Goodrich of Oneida, New York. John, Jr. became
a manager of Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia (1848-1859) where he
taught physicians how to refract the eye to determine the correct
prescription for eyeglasses.

William Y. McAllister (1812-1896), son of John McAllister, Jr., took
over the family business in 1836 partnering with spectacle maker James
W. McQueen. William also continued to work at Wills Eye Hospital. In
1853, his brother Thomas H. McAllister (1824-1898) joined him in
business but left in 1865 to establish his own practice and optical store in
New York City. In 1882, William’s sons James Cook (1856-1928) and
William Mitchell (1842-1912) continued to operate the Philadelphia
store.

William Y. McAllister’s son Francis Wardale McAllister (1853-1920)
moved to Baltimore, MD and opened his own practice in 1881 after a
decade in service to his father. F.W. McAllister became a founding
member of the AOA in 1898 and was active in organized optometry
throughout his career. He testified on behalf of optometry legislation in
Pennsylvania and Maryland, served as a member of the Maryland State
Board of Examiners of Optometry and wrote numerous articles and speeches. His son James Wardale McAllister (1894-1977) continued to practice optometry in Baltimore until his retirement in 1972.

**System of Arrangement:**

The collection number (501.01) was assigned according to a unique classification system for optometry devised by the ILAMO staff. This collection was placed within a larger group of collections on “Optometry as a Profession: The Eye and Vision” (500) which consisted of personal papers, biographical files and subject-based collections. Four series can be discerned from the original order imposed by Dablemont: 1) research arranged alphabetically by last name of researcher, 2) biographical files arranged chronologically by birth year of subject, 3) subject files organized alphabetically, and 4) correspondence files organized alphabetically by creator. Original order was maintained when possible.

**Conditions of Access and Use**

**Conditions Governing Access:**

This collection is open for research use.

**Physical Access:**

Some of the letters, manuscripts, slides and photographs are fragile and have been rehoused and stored separately. As a preservation measure, researchers must use either digital surrogates or paper preservation copies rather than originals.

**Technical Access:**

Presentations were created using 35 mm slides.

**Reproduction and Use:**

All requests for copying of materials must be submitted to the archivist in writing. Authorization to publish, quote, or reproduce must be obtained from the Archives & Museum of Optometry, St. Louis, MO. Unpublished manuscripts are protected by copyright. Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the copyright holder and The Archives & Museum of Optometry.
FINDING AID TO THE INTERNATIONAL, LIBRARY, ARCHIVES & MUSEUM OF OPTOMETRY
COLLECTION ON THE MCA LLISTER FAMILY OF PHILADELPHIA

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

FINDING AIDS: This Collection is listed in the ILAMO Card Catalog. Elements in this finding aid are duplicated in The Archives & Museum of Optometry’s PastPerfect database in the Archival Module. Item list for collection in MS Excel file in Collection File for MSS 501.01.

ACQUISITION AND APPRAISAL

CUSTODIAL HISTORY: The Collection was transferred from the ILAMO to the Archives & Museum of Optometry in 2009 when the library was deaccessioned. The items in this collection were compiled by Ms. Dablemont from various sources. The “Optical Goods” Catalog (reprint) by T.H. McAllister was donated by Nicholas Graver in 1971. The Philadelphia Collection Catalog containing the Peale Portraits was donated by Robert Schwarz of Schwarz and Son in 1977. Newspaper profile and obituaries for James Wardale McAllister donated by Jacob Staiman, 1977. The pamphlet “Our Eyesight” by William Y. McAllister (circa 1865) donated by Reinhold Kirschenmann in 1986. The original manuscripts of Dr. Maxwell Miller’s research were donated by Dr. Miller (date unknown). The provenance of original letters to McAllister and Sons, the manuscript of F.W. McAllister’s 1919 speech and the photocopies of manuscripts and family histories is unknown, but was possibly donated by Dr. Maxwell Miller as part of his ongoing research.

APPRAISAL, DESTRUCTION AND SCHEDULING: Materials in this collection have not been appraised.

ACCRUALS: No further accruals are expected but may be accepted.

RELATED MATERIALS

EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF ORIGINALS: Digital surrogates and preservation copies of some original materials in this collection are available. Originals of many of the primary source materials photocopied in this collection are held in other repositories.
FINDING AID TO THE INTERNATIONAL, LIBRARY, ARCHIVES & MUSEUM OF OPTOMETRY
COLLECTION ON THE MCALLISTER FAMILY OF PHILADELPHIA

The indenture of James McQueen is held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The family history written by William Young McAllister is held by The Library Company of Philadelphia. Letters from Thomas Jefferson are held at The Medical Library at the Washington University School of Medicine and at the National Archives and Records Administration. Many of the original family histories, manuscripts and letters created by McAllister family members were held in private collections at the time of deposit. McAllister Family materials may be held at the Hagley Museum, The Library of Congress, and The Pennsylvania Historical Society.


NOTES: Original manuscripts and letters have been encapsulated. Duplicate articles and material not valuable to research were removed.
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COLLECTION ON THE McALLISTER FAMILY OF PHILADELPHIA

PREFERRED CITATION: ILAMO COLLECTION ON THE McALLISTER FAMILY OF
PHILADELPHIA, THE ARCHIVES & MUSEUM OF OPTOMETRY, OPTOMETRY CARES —
THE AOA FOUNDATION.

DESCRIPTION CONTROL: FINDING AID WRITTEN BY KIRSTEN HEBERT 2017. DESCRIPTION BASED ON DACS.
PASTPerfect FINDING AID CREATED USING ARCHIVES MODULE IN PASTPerfect v5
FOLLOWING CAUST-ELLENGOBEN, CELIA. 2013 “PASTPerfect-ion”” OPTIMIZING
PASTPerfect FOR ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION.
# Collection Inventory

## Series 1: Research

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<td>ILAMO—Slide Presentation, 1969 Exhibit, Adele and Walter McAllister</td>
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<td>LETOCHA, CHARLES E., M.D. – WILLS EYE HOSPITAL Presentation</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>GRAVER, NICHOLAS M. – Timeline and T.H. McAllister Reprint</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>MILLER, MAXWELL – Original Research, Manuscripts and Photocopies of Primary Sources</td>
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## Series 2: Subject Files

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<td>ASTIGMATISM AND CYLINDRICAL LENSES—ARTICLES</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>BUSINESS CARDS—ARTICLES</td>
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<td>COLONIAL PERIOD AND THOMAS JEFFERSON—ARTICLES</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>PEALE PORTRAITS—CATALOG</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>RECEIPTS FROM CHESTNUT STREET-19TH CENTURY</td>
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## Series 3: Biographies

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<td>McAllister, John, Sr.</td>
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<td>McAllister, John, Jr.</td>
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# Finding Aid to the International, Library, Archives & Museum of Optometry Collection on the McAllister Family of Philadelphia

## Series 4: Correspondence

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<td>Goodrich, Chauncey E. to John McAllister and Son (photocopy)</td>
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<td>Goodrich, Chauncey E. to John McAllister and Son (see also Oversize Box 2 for original)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Von Phil, H. to John McAllister &amp; Son (see also Oversize Box 2 for original)</td>
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<td>Wood, Joseph to John McAllister (see also Oversize Box 2 for original)</td>
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