

Mary Brevard Alexander Howell papers

Introduction

The papers of Mary Brevard Alexander Howell span the years from the late 1800's to her death in 1988. Family photographs and materials belonging to her mother and husband contribute to those items which predate Howell's birth in 1901. The major portion of the materials reflects various periods in her life: high school and college, her early years as a wife and mother in Charlotte, North Carolina and her later years.

Almost all of the materials are of a personal nature. Strengths of the collection are the groups of correspondence from college, her engagement and early married years, and letters received from soldiers during both World Wars. Many items of interest from the Charlotte area can be found in the printed materials series. This collection does not contain extensive information pertaining to her many civic and club activities.

Extent: 6.25 linear feet.

Mary Brevard Alexander Howell Papers
Biographical Note

Mary Brevard Alexander Howell was born in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1901, the only child of Sydenham B. Alexander, Jr. and Mary Watson Robertson Alexander. The Alexanders were a prominent Charlotte family whose ancestors included John McKnitt Alexander, a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. Howell's relatives included paternal grandfather Sydenham Benoni Alexander, who served as a congressional representative and paternal Aunt Julia McGehee Alexander, the second licensed woman attorney in North Carolina.

Howell, called "Vard" by family and friends, attended Charlotte High School and graduated in 1919. She went away to college and spent two years at Gunston Hall in Washington, DC.

In 1922, Howell married Billy Shaw Howell, who was also a Charlotte native. His education included Charlotte University School, Major Baird's School and Davidson College. He was an Army combat pilot in France during World War I. Following their marriage; Billy Shaw Howell traveled while employed by the Luce Furniture Company. Later he was associated with the Shaw Distributing Company and Shaw Manufacturing Company.

Howell gave birth to two sons, Sydenham Alexander in 1923 and Billy "Wool" Shaw Howell, Jr. in approximately 1930. Their elder son died in 1938 after a brief illness while at boarding school.

During her adult years, Howell was very active in civic affairs. At various times, she was a board member for a number of charitable organizations including the Florence Crittendon Home and the Presbyterian Foundation. She was a board member of the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County from 1941 until 1971. She was very active in the Junior Leagues of America, serving as the local chapter president in 1931 and as national vice president in 1937.

Howell's husband died in 1949. Howell died in 1988 and was survived by her son and four grandchildren.

Mary Brevard Alexander Howell Papers
Scope and Content Note

The Mary Brevard Alexander Howell papers span the years of her life from 1901 to 1988 with the bulk of the materials falling into her young adult years and her later years.

Materials include correspondence, photographs, photo albums, scrapbooks and printed materials. The correspondence is predominantly personal in nature, and centers on Howell, her mother, Mary "Two" Robertson Alexander, and her husband, Billy Shaw Howell. There is a large photograph collection that portrays Howell and her family, as well as both Alexander and Howell ancestors and her family, as well as both Alexander and Howell ancestors. Printed materials include memorabilia, which provide interesting examples of church and social functions and a wide assortment of newspaper clippings. Together, the all the materials yield a revealing overview of the family life and personal relationship of one of Charlotte's prestigious families.

Mary Brevard Alexander Howell Papers

Series Descriptions

1. Correspondence - Mary Brevard Alexander Howell. 1910-1982. 21 inches. Eighty Folders in four boxes. Arranged chronologically into sub-series which are in alphabetical order.

This series contains primarily personal correspondence sent and received by Mary Brevard Alexander Howell. The largest groups of letters sent are ones mailed to Billy Shaw Howell during the months before they were married and the first year of their marriage when he traveled for business purposes. A second group contains letters Howell sent to her mother and son during a 1953 trip to England to attend Queen Elizabeth II's coronation. Letters, which were received by Howell, span the years 1912 to 1982. Some interesting groups of letters include ones received during her school years at Gunston Hall in Washington, DC, and mail received from soldiers in both World Wars. Other types of correspondence included in this series are greeting cards (one in which was enclosed a family history prepared by her aunt Violet Alexander, postcards and telegrams.

2. Correspondence – Mary Robertson Alexander. 1900-1945. 1.5 inches. Eighteen folders. Arranged chronologically into sub-series, which are in alphabetical order.

Letters received by Howell's mother, Mary Robertson Alexander, are contained in this series. All correspondence is personal in nature. The first major group contains letters she received from her mother, Mary Grattan Robertson, and other relatives during their 1900 tour of Europe. She also corresponded with soldiers during the World Wars and their letters to her are in this series.

3. Correspondence – Billy Shaw Howell. 1906-1943. 1 inch. Nine Folders. Arranged chronologically.

This series contains a small group of personal and business correspondence sent and received by Billy Shaw Howell. Letters included are from his parents and mother-in-law. A 1915 invitation to join a fraternity at Davidson College is part of this series.

4. Correspondence – Other. 1896-1918. 1 inch. 12 folders. Arranged chronologically.

This series contains letters exchanged between Howell's family members and friends.

5. Printed Materials. 1918 – 1983. 4 inches. 26 folders. Arranged chronologically by type of printed material.

This series contains an assortment of various printed materials collected by Howell that reflect different activities and events in her life. Included in this series are church bulletins, programs, news clippings, as well as a dance card from 1918

and her report cards from Gunston Hall. Clippings encompass many family members' lives highlights and obituary notices.

6. Literary Productions. 1833 - c1980 3 Folders and 3 books. Arranged by type of material.
This series contains poetry written to Howell by friends on the occasion of her eightieth birthday. The books in this series include *Flora's Dictionary by a Lady* written in 1833, the 1919 Charlotte High School yearbook, *Snips and Cuts* and *Charlotte in Picture in Prose* written by Howell's aunt, Julia M. Alexander in 1906.
7. Financial Documents. 1921 – 1926. 1 folder. Arranged by type
A small collection of materials cannot be classified as personal. There are only four items: two receipts from the 1920s, a 1926 promissory note and a 1933 deposit ticket from the Union National Bank.
8. Photographs. Late 1800s – 1980s. 20 inches. 4 boxes. Arranged alphabetically.
A sizeable collection of family photographs comprise this series.
9. Photograph Albums 1897 – 1950s. 4 boxes
A photograph album belonging to Mary Robertson Alexander and three of Howell's make up this series. Alexander's album spans the period from 1897 to 1927 and includes images of family and trips taken to Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina in 1902, Niagara Falls in 1899 and Washington, DC in 1899. One of Howell's albums chronicles her early years. The second one shows in the early years of her marriage and as a mother in Charlotte. The latter album includes photographs of Sydenham Hall at Darlington School in Rome, Georgia which was dedicated in 1939 in memory of her son, Sydenham Alexander Howell who died while attending the school.
10. Scrapbooks. 1885 – 1941. 3 boxes
Two of Mary Robertson Alexander's scrapbooks are in this series. The first cover the years 1885 to the 1920s and contains memorabilia from her wedding and honeymoon, family occasions, Howell's birth and childhood, as a number of other events. Her second album records the deaths of her husband, Sydenham B. Alexander, Jr., and her grandson, Sydenham Alexander Howell. The last scrapbook in this series is one kept by Howell to chronicle her engagement and wedding to Billy Shaw Howell in 1922.

Mary Brevard Alexander Howell Papers
Manuscript Collection Six

Correspondence – Mary Brevard Alexander Howell 1910/11 to 1982 – Letters Sent

Box	Series	Folder	Item description	Date
1	1	1	Roberts, Mary Grattan	1910/11
		2	Alexander Jr., Sydenham/Mary Robertson	1920/21
		3	Alexander, Mary Robertson	1922
		4	Howell, Billy Shaw	Nov. 1921
		5	“”	Jan. 1922
		6	“”	Feb. 1922
		7		June 1922
		8	“”	Jly/Aug. 1922
		9	“”	Sept. 1922
		10	“”	Oct. 1922
		11	“”	Undated 1922
		12		Dec/Jan. 1923
		13	“”	April 1923
		14	“”	Feb/Mar 1923
		15	“”	June 1923
		16	“”	July 1923
		17	“”	Aug. 1923
		18		Sept. 1923
		19	“”	Undated 1923
		20	Howell, Clara Shaw	1924
		21	Howell, Billy Shaw	1926
		22	Howell, Jr., Billy Shaw	1953

Letters Received – Mary Brevard Alexander Howell 1912

2	1	23	Nash, Fred	1912
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Letters Received – Mary Brevard Alexander Howell 1917 – 1919

		24	Alexander, Mary Robertson	1918
		25	Hamilton, Ercyl	11/1917-2/1918
		26	“	3/1918-6/1918
		27	“	7/1918-12/1920
		28	“	Jan. 1919

Letters Received 1919-1923

		29	Alexander, Mary Robertson	10/1919-12/1920
		30	“ “	Jan.-Feb. 1921
		31	“ “	Mar. 1921
		32	“ “	April 1921
		33	“ “	undated 1919-21

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Letters Received 1919-1923

Box	Series	Folder	Item description	Date
2	1	34-39	Alexander, Mary Robertson	Undated 1919-21
3	1	40	Alexander, Jr., Sydenham B.	Undated 1919-21
		41	Miscellaneous	1920-1921
		42	Hamilton, Ercyl	1922
		43	Bowles, Lil	1923
		44	Alexander, Mary Robertson	no date
			Alexander Jr., Sydenham B.	May 1923
		45	Howell, Billy Shaw	[1923]

Letters Received 1935-1938

46	Howell, Billy Shaw	1937-1938
47	Howell, Clara Shaw	1938
48	Tillett, John	1935

Letters Received 1942-1949

49	Busby, Jack	05/1944-04/1945
50	“”	05/1945-12/1945
51	Howell, Billy Shaw	1944
52	“”	Undated
53	Lashley, W.A.	01/1944-02/1946
54	McAuliffe, Major Gen. A.C.	October 1945
55	Parker, Roland B.	1944-1945
56	Wilcox, James	01/1945-02/1946
57	Miscellaneous	1942, 1945
58	“”	1949

Letters Received 1950-1984

4	1	59	Busby, Jack	1957, 1976
60			Gilcrest, Ellen (Restricted)	1970-1982
		61	Withers, Clara Shaw Howell	Undated
		62	European Trip, from friends	Sept. 1970

Letters Received Miscellaneous

63-74	B,C,D,G,H,J,K,M,P,R.S	no dates
75	Greeting Cards – misc.	no dates
76	Greeting Card – Alexander, Violet	

Postcards

77	Alexander, Mary Robertson	1922
	Howell, Billy Shaw	1922
	Hamilton, Ercyl	1919
	Lashley, W.A.	1944
	Payne, Sarah	1970
	Telegrams Sent	
78	Howell, Billy Shaw	1922-1923

Mary Brevard Alexander Howell Papers
 Manuscript Collection Six

Box	Series	Folder	Item description	Date
Telegrams Received				
4	1	79	Alexander, Sydenham & Mary	1920-1921
Invitations				
		80	Bland, Terry	1917
			Gunston Hall, Senior Class Usher	1920
			Olivia Pres. Church 50 th Anniversary	1963
			First Pres. Church 150 th Anniversary	1982
Correspondence of Mary Robertson Alexander Letters Received 1900-1907				
5	2	1	Alexander, Captain Sydenham Benoni	1900
		2	Robertson, Mary Grattan	1900
		3	Robertson, James, Douglas, Lucy	1900
		4	Alexander, Julia	1901 and 1907
		5	Alexander, Violet	1907
Letters Received 1917-1919				
5	2	6	Alexander, Emory	1918
		7	Cleary, Charles B.	1917-1918
		8	Cleary, Helen Jenks	1917
		9	Hamilton, Ercyl	1917-1918
		10	Taylor, Bill	Undated
		11	Taylor, Effie G.	1917
		12	Miscellaneous	
Letters Received 1921-1945				
5	2	13	Murrill, Ralph	1921
		14	Alexander, Jr. Sydenham Benoni	1932 & Undated
		15	Alexander, Sydenham	1945
		16	Alexander, T.W.	1944-1945
		17	Miscellaneous	Undated
Telegrams				
		18	Taylor, Bill	1918, 1921
			Robert, Louise	
Correspondence of Billy Shaw Howell				
Letters Sent				
5	3	1	"Auntie"	1906
			Howell, J.H. & Shaw, Clara	1922
			Dregge, Martin	1923
Letters Received				
		2	Alexander, Mary Robertson	1922, 1923
		3	Howell, Clara Shaw	1922-1923, 1926

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Letters Received by Billy Shaw Howell

Box	Series	Folder	Item description	Date
5	3	4	Howell, John Herbert	1923
		5	Howell, Sydenham	1936
Miscellaneous				
		6	Greene, Hardin	1939
			Tynan, E.W.	1943
			Wilson, James E.	Undated
Postcards				
5	3		Alexander, Mary Robertson	1922
Telegrams				
			Harry Stone Hoult Furniture Company Howell, John Herbert	
Invitations				
			Davidson College Fraternity Pledge	1915
Correspondence – Other – Letters				
5	4	1	Alexander, Jr., Sydenham B. to Alexander, Sophie	1896
		2	Robertson, Mary Grattan to Alexander Jr., Sydenham B.	1900
		3	Robertson, Marty Grattan to Robertson, James F.	1908
		4	Taylor Jr., William to Robertston	c 1918
		5	Robertson, Alex F. to Robertson, James F.	1918
		6	Howerton, James R. to Howell, John Herbert	1922
		7	“Knoxie” to Howell, Sydenham A.	1923
		8	Hicks, Bob to Wilcox Jr., James to Johnson, Albert, Sidney	1941
		9	Robertson, Archibald to Smartt, Lucy A.	Undated
Postcards				
5	4	10	Leftwich, D.L. to Howell, John Herbert	1922
Restricted Letters				
5	4	11	Withers, Clara Shaw Howell to Gilcrest, Ellen Gilcrest, Ellen to Howell, Jr., Billy S.	1970 1988

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Printed Materials – Church Bulletins

Box	Series	Folder	Item description	Date
6	5	1	Caldwell Memorial Presbyterian	1923
		2	Fst. Pres. Ch. Charlotte, The Spire	1940-1964
		3	Fst. Pres. Ch. Shreveport, La	May 1958
		4	Presby. Ch. Training Sch. linked with	1954-1955
		5	Link:	1965-1966
		6	Fst. Pres. Ch. Shreveport, LA Squadron 8A	March 1944

Programs

7	Charlotte High School Class Day	May 1919
8	Charlotte High School Commencement	May 1919
9	Victory "Pageant of Light"	Jan 1919
10	Cleary College Commencement	Oct. 1919
11	Shubert-Garrick Theatre	Feb. 1920
12	Gunston Hall – <i>As You Like It</i>	May 1920
13	Gunston Hall – Graduating Exercises	June 1920
14	Pageant of Charlotte & Old Mecklenburg	May 1925
15	First Pres. Church Youth Theatre	Feb. 1983

Dance Card

16	Motor Mechanics Pan-Hellenic Dance	May 1918
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Report Cards

17	Howell, Mary Brevard Alexander	1920-1921
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Calendar

18	Calendar, miniature	1921
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Admittance

19	Queen Elizabeth II Coronation	1953
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Magazine

20	Junior League of Charlotte	1956
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Itinerary

21	European Trip	1970
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Postcards

22	Postcard Scenes
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Clippings

23	Howell, Mary Brevard Alexander
24	Howell, Billy Shaw
25	Miscellaneous Family & Friends Alice Alexander, Sydenham Alexander, Alice Winston Spruill Alexander, Captain Sydenham Benoni Alexander, Odom Alexander, Mrs. Emory Alexander, Sydenham B. Alexander Jr.,

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Box	Series	Folder	Item description	Date
6	5	25	Violet Alexander, Matthew Fontaine Maury, Robert Grattan, Mary Grattan Robertson, George Grattan, Mary Robertson Alexander, Enderly, Billy Shaw Howell, Jr., Jack Busby	
		26	Gift Certificate: Howell, Sydenham Alexander	1931
Literary Productions				
6	6	1	Poetry to Mary Brevard Alexander Howell	
		2	Poetry – Author Unknown	
		3	Short Story: “Mexican and a Cowboy”	Undated
		4	<i>Flora’s Dictionary By a Lady</i>	1833
		5	<i>Snips and Cuts: Charlotte HS Yearbook</i>	1919
		6	<i>Charlotte in Picture and Prose</i> by Julia M. Alexander	1906
Financial Documents				
6	7	1	Receipt: Howell, Mary Brevard Alexander	1921
			Receipt: Southern Real Estate Loan & Trust	1926
			Promissory Note	1926
			Deposit ticket Union National Bank	1933
Photographs				
7	7	1	Alexander, Julia M.	
		2	Alexander, Mary Robertson	
		3	Alexander, Pattie	
		4	Alexander Jr., Sydenham B.	
		5	Alexander, Captain Sydenham Benoni	
		6	Alexander, Violet	
		7	Alexander, Violet Graham	
		8	Brevard, Dr. R.J.	
		9	Grattan, G.G. and Mary	
		10	Howell, Billy Shaw Howell: childhood	
		11	Same boyhood	
		12	Same military	
		13	Same basketball	
		14	Same adult	
		15	Howell, Clara Shaw	
		16	Howell, Doris	
		17	Howell, John Herbert	
7	8	18	Howell, Mary Brevard Alexander	childhood
		19	same	young adult
		20	same	young matron

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Box	Series	Folder	Item description	Date
Photographs				
7	8	21	Howell, Mary Brevard Alexander:	adult
		22	same	adult
		23	same	adult
		24	same	later years
		25	Alexander, Sydenham Alexander	
		26	Kelly, Mary Howell Withers	
		26	Robertson, James F.	
		27	Robertson James and Douglass	
		28	Robertson, Lucy	
		29	Robertson Lelia	
		30	Robertson, Mary Grattan	
		31	Robertson, Thomas H.	
		32	Sadler, Marie	
		33	Shaw, Harry P.	
		34	Shaw, William E.	
		35	Withers, Clara Shaw Howell	
		36	North Carolina A&M College	1895-1896
		37	Miscellaneous: Nicholson, Sallie Hobson, Pattie Nelson, Sallie Lee Minor, Martha Divers Robertson, Scott Loomis Lashley, W.A. Taliaferro, "Cousin Daddie" Ryntals, Bessie Oates, Mary Taylor, Ralph L.	1900 1945 1897 1897 1943
		38	Miscellaneous Unidentified	
9	7	39	Sons of the American Revolution Alexander Jr., Sydenham B. Alexander, Mary Robertson	1932
		40	Charlotte Aero Club Luncheon Howell, Billy Shaw	1921
		41	Daguerreotype – Unknown Woman	
		42	Tintype (2) Unknown Man, Women	
		43	Ambrotype (2) Three Men, Women	

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Oversized Photographs

Box	Series	Folder	Item description	Date
10	8	44	Alexander, Mary Robertson	
		45	Howell, Billy Shaw	
		46	Howell, Mary Brevard Alexander	
		47	Howell, Sydenham Alexander	
		48	Military School Class of Billy Shaw Howell	
		49	Robertson Family Grouping: James F. Robertson, Mary Grattan Robertson, James F. Robertson, Jr., Mary Robertson Alexander, Louisa Robertson Graham, Douglass Robertson Alston and Lucy Robertson Moore	

Photograph Albums

11	9	1	Alexander, Mary Robertson
12	9	2	Howell, Mary Brevard Alexander
14	9	3	same
15	9	4	same

Scrapbooks

16	10	1	Alexander, Mary Robertson
17	10	2	same
18	10	3	Howell, Mary Brevard Alexander