

The Filson Historical Society

**Cecil-Norman family
Papers, 1858-1943**

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Curator of Special Collections.

Size of Collection:

.33 cu ft

Location Number:

Mss. A C388

Cecil-Norman family Papers, 1858-1943

Scope and Content Note

This collection of letters and documents reflects the professional pursuits and family life of the Cecil, Norman, and Van Dyke families of Louisville and Spencer County, Kentucky.

The bulk of the collection consists of typed transcripts of 34 letters from Dr. John Giles Cecil (1855-1913) of Louisville, Ky. to his wife, Elizabeth "Lizzie" Robinson Cecil (1855-1932) during his 1893 European tour (folder 1). Dr. Cecil describes in detail his visits to the leading medical treatment facilities for women and his meetings with the foremost gynecologists and obstetricians of Europe. Among those he sought out were Dr. Christian Billroth (1829-1894), the father of modern abdominal surgery, Max Saenger (1853-1903), who modernized the Caesarean section procedure, and Dr. Thomas Spencer Wills (1818-1897), the household surgeon for Queen Victoria and the British Royal family. Dr. Cecil witnessed numerous surgical procedures which he describes at length.

Dr. Cecil also describes the people and sights of the great cities he visited in England, Ireland, Scotland, France, modern day Germany, Austria and modern day Czechoslovakia. In letters written during his voyage across the Atlantic, he makes frequent references to the "High Priestess" of Theosophy, Annie Besant (1847-1933) and her colorful traveling companion, the Hindu scholar, Gyanendra Nath Chakraverti (1861-1936). He also penned an unflattering description of the British royal family he observed in London - the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII), the Duke of York (the future King George V) and the latter's wife, the future Queen Mary. Other letters include his criticism of dueling in Germany and a brief description of an anarchist bomb attack in Paris.

The collection also includes 7 letters from Mary Robinson Cecil Norman (1883-1964) to her father during his travels abroad, along with 1932 correspondence between Mary Norman and her sister, Martha Cecil Wilson (1888-1975) regarding the division of their late mother's personal and household property (folder 2).

Correspondence in folder 3 is varied. Items include letters from Martha "Mattie" Robinson Young (1846-1891), the wife of prominent Louisville attorney and Confederate veteran, Bennett H. Young, describing Dr. Cecil's marriage to her sister Lizzie in 1882 and her 1891 visit to Philadelphia. Other items include 1891 Christmas greetings from the George Louis Everbach (1855-1929) family of Louisville to Solomon R. Norman (1823-1897) and Lucinda VanDyke Norman (1828-1912) of Spencer County, Ky., the grandparents of Jonathan V. Norman. Also included is a letter dated 7 May (1897) from Mary "Mollie" Johnston Van Dyke (1832-1920) to her sister-in-law, Lucinda Van Dyke Norman in which she expresses her sympathies for the recent loss of her husband, Solomon. A 1932 letter from Martha Cecil Wilson to her daughter Elizabeth Cecil Wilson (1913-1994) describes fellow American missionaries and their activities

at Mokausan, China. Separate items included an 1858 letter written by Rev. Thomas Grubbs Gooch (1800-1874) of Logan County, Ky. in which he discusses family and farm news, and a 1871 New Years greeting card. In a 1943 letter to Wendell L. Willkie, who was seeking the Republican nomination in the 1944 presidential election, Arthur Judson (1871-1951), the father-in-law of Jonathan VanDyke Norman, Jr. (1905-1987), comments at length on President Franklin D. Roosevelt's domestic and war policies. He offers suggestions regarding party strategy and predicts that the 1944 election will be the Republican's "greatest test since the Civil War."

Oversized folder 4 contains Dr. Cecil's 1880 certificate of admission to the staff of the Louisville City Hospital.

Also present are two draft speeches (ca. 1920, 1924) by Jonathan VanDyke Norman (1877-1952), a Louisville attorney who married Mary R. Cecil. These speeches focus on the Southern hardwood timber industry and inter-state commerce. Notably, he comments at length on the "Red Scare" of 1919-20 in his 1920 speech (folder 5).

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Biographical Notes

Born in Monticello, Ky., Dr. John Giles Cecil (1855-1913) was the son of Russell H. Cecil (1815-1890) and Lucy Ann Phillips (1828-1913). After graduating from Princeton in 1876, he continued his professional education in Louisville before matriculating at the University of Berlin. After his return to Louisville from Europe he married Elizabeth "Lizzie" Robinson (1855-1932), the daughter of Rev. Stuart Robinson (1814-1881) and Mary E. Brigham (1823-1909). In addition to pursuing his medical practice, Dr. Cecil also served as professor of medicine at the University of Louisville and in 1907 was elected president of the Kentucky Medical Association. An elder in the Second Presbyterian Church, Cecil also served as president of the Louisville branch of the Y.M.C.A.

Martha Cecil Wilson (1888-1975), the daughter of Dr. John G. and "Lizzie" Robinson Cecil married Rev. James Morrison Wilson (1885-1949). They were American missionaries near Shanghai from 1912 to 1941, when Martha and their children left for America at the outbreak of World War II. Rev. Wilson remained behind and spent over a year in a Japanese prison camp.

Another daughter, Mary Robinson Cecil (1883-1964) married Jonathan VanDyke Norman (1877-1952). A Louisville attorney, he served as legal counsel for the Southern Hardwood Traffic Association, a lumber shipping firm headquartered in Memphis, Tenn. He was the son of Abner Ernest Norman (1850-1922), a U.S. Land Office surveyor for whom Norman, Oklahoma was named and Katherine Berry (1850-1927). He was the grandson of Solomon R. Norman (1823-1897) and Lucinda VanDyke Norman (1828-1912) of Spencer County, Ky. Mary A. "Molly" Johnston (1832-1920) married Jonathan G. VanDyke (1825-1893), the brother of Lucinda VanDyke Norman.

The son of Frederick Judson and Alice Barber, Arthur Judson (1871-1951) was born in Bloomington, New Jersey. An educator, advertising executive and gentleman farmer, Judson, who graduated from Yale University in 1894, was retired at the time he wrote Republican presidential hopeful Wendell Willkie in 1943 (item in folder 3). He and his wife Gertrude Fuller relocated from Florida to Louisville after 1940 and both are buried in Cave Hill Cemetery. Their daughter Alice Barber Judson (1906-1982) was the wife of Jonathan VanDyke Norman, Jr. (1905-1987).

While his connection with the Cecil Norman family is unclear, Thomas Grubbs Gooch (1800-1874) was the son of Thomas Gooch (c1750-1815) and Lucy Grubbs (c1740-c1848) of Shelby County, Ky. A pioneer minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church he settled in Logan County, Ky. in 1821. Forced to leave Kentucky for his Confederate sympathies he returned to Logan County after the Civil War where he remained a respected member of the community until his death.

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Folder list

- Folder 1: John G. Cecil Correspondence [typescripts], 1893
Folder 2: Mary R. Cecil Norman Correspondence, 1893, 1932
Folder 3: Correspondence, 1858-1943
Folder 4: John G. Cecil Louisville Hospital Certificate of Admission, 1880
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Folder 5: J.V. Norman Speeches, ca. 1920, 1924

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Added Entries

Anarchists - France
Anticommunist movements - United States
Bantock, George Granville, 1837-1913
Beere, Fanny Mary Bernard, 1856-1915
Besant, Annie, 1847-1933
Billroth, Christian Albert Theodor, 1829-1894
Blain, John Mercer, 1869-1932
Bruce, Barbara, 1852-1934
Cameron, Murdoch, ca. 1847-1930
Cecil, Elizabeth Robinson, 1855-1932
Cecil, John Giles, 1855-1913
Chakravarti, Gyanendra Nath, 1861-1936
Cullingsworth, Charles James, 1841-1908
Dublin (Ireland) - Description and travel
Dueling - Germany
Edinburgh (Scotland) - Description and travel
Edward VII, King of Great Britain, 1841-1910
Everbach family
Freund, Wilhelm Alexander, 1833-1917
Galaban, Alfred Lewis, 1843-1913
Generative organs, Female - Surgery
George V, King of Great Britain, 1865-1936
Germany - Description and travel
Gooch, Thomas Grubbs, 1800-1874
Great Britain - Description and travel
Gynecology - Practice
Hardwood industry
Hemphill, Charles Robert, 1852-1932
Interstate commerce - Law and legislation - United States
Leopold, Christian Gerhard, 1846-1911
London (England) - Description and travel
Lucas, Ida M., ca. 1847-1893
MacCormac, Sir William, 1836-1901
MacEwen, Sir William, 1848-1924
Mary, Queen, consort of George V, King of Great Britain, 1867-1953
Missions, American - China
New Deal, 1933-1939
New Year cards

Norman family
Norman, J. V. (Jonathan Van Dyke), 1877-1952
Obstetricians
Obstetrics - Surgery
Paris (France) - Description and travel
Paris (Steamship)
Parker, Joseph, 1830-1902
Physicians - Certification
Prague (Czech Republic) - Description and travel
Rennie family
Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-)
Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945
Rotunda Hospital (Dublin, Ireland)
Saenger, Max, 1853-1903
Theosophy
Tilford, Henry, ca. 1845-1893
Tyler, Sir George, 1837-1897
United States. Interstate Commerce Commission
University of Edinburgh
University of Prague
Van Dyke family
Vienna (Austria) - Description and travel
Widowhood
Wilkie, Wendell L. (Wendell Lewis), 1892-1944
Wills, Thomas Spencer, 1818-1897
Wilson, Martha Cecil, 1888-1975
Winckel, F. (Franz), 1837-1912
Women's hospitals - Germany - Berlin
Women's hospitals - Germany - Leipzig
World War, 1939-1945
World's Colombian Exposition (1893: Chicago, Ill.)
Young, Martha Robinson, 1846-1891