

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Major Laurence Abert Williams Papers
MS-12

Introduction

Major Laurence Abert Williams (1833-1879) was the son of Captain William George William (1801-1846) and America Pinckney (Peter) Williams (1803-1842). America (Peter) Williams was the daughter of Thomas Peter (1769-1834) and Martha (Custis) Peter (1777-1854), the builders of Tudor Place. After the death of his parents, he and his siblings were placed under the care of their grandmother, Martha (Custis) Peter at Tudor Place. He attended West Point, graduated in 1852, and served in the Union Army, but was discharged in 1863 for absence without leave. He married Sarah Virginia Law (1837-1912) on June 16, 1863. Their daughter, Anna Wright Williams (1872-1961), married Armistead Peter, Jr. (1870-1960), of Tudor Place.

Much of the material in this collection is related to his effort to be reinstated to the Army rolls. For more material on his efforts for reinstatement, see the collection of his sister, Martha (Williams) Carter (1827-1899), who supported this action. This collection also includes correspondence, subject files, and literary productions

These papers were a part of the estate Armistead Peter placed under the auspices of the Carostead Foundation, Incorporated, in 1966; the name of the foundation was changed to Tudor Place Foundation, Incorporated, in 1987. Use and rights of the papers are controlled by the Foundation. The collection was processed and the register prepared by James Kaser, a project archivist hired through a National Historical Records and Publications grant in 1992. This document was reformatted by Emily Rusch and revised by Tudor Place archivist Wendy Kail in 2020.

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Major Laurence Abert Williams Papers
MS-12

Biographical Sketch

Major Laurence Abert Williams (1832-1879) was born in 1832, the son of Captain William George Williams (1801-1846) and America (Peter) Williams (1803-1842). After the death of his mother in 1842, his three sisters and younger brother went to Tudor Place to live with their grandmother, Martha (Custis) Peter, but he remained in Buffalo, New York with his father, who attended to the boy's early education. The reassignments and travels of his father's career, however, made supervision difficult, and eventually the boy joined his siblings at Tudor Place.

He entered Georgetown College on November 15, 1844, where he studied until 1847; he then attended the Alexandria Boarding School in 1848 to prepare for the West Point Military Academy. As the oldest son of a West Point graduate, he was admitted to the Academy on July 1, 1848, as an "at large" appointment and graduated in 1852 as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 7th Infantry. He served first at Newport Barracks, Kentucky.

He was then assigned frontier duty at Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, 1852-1854, and frontier duty at Fort Steilacoom, Washington, in 1855. He was appointed a 2nd Lieutenant of the 4th Infantry in June 1854 and assigned to recruiting service at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1855-1856. Major Laurence Abert Williams was transferred to the 10th Infantry in 1855, promoted to 1st Lieutenant in 1856, and served at Fort Ridgeley, Minnesota, 1856-1857.

In the 10th Infantry he was Aide-de-camp to General Albert Sidney Johnston 1858-1860 at the Utah Expedition, Utah Territory [Utah and Wyoming]; he acted as Assistant Adjutant General to the Department of Utah February-August 1860. Despite his family's southern roots, when the Civil War commenced he remained with the Union army and was promoted to Captain of the 10th Infantry, serving under General George Brinton McClellan in July 1861; he was promoted to Major in the 6th Cavalry in September 1861. He rode reconnaissance from Alexandria, Virginia, toward the Rappahannock River March 10-18, 1862, and was in command of his regiment in the Virginia Peninsula Campaign March-June 1862.

Major Laurence Abert Williams was on sick leave June-October 1862, but on detached service in New York City in October and November of that year; however, he was declared absent without leave November 1862-March 1863 and dismissed from service March 11, 1863.

In 1863 on Staten Island, New York, he married Sarah Virginia Law (1837-1912), the daughter of the industrialist George Law (1806-1881). Their home was in Batavia, New York. Four children were born to them, of whom two survived. Their daughter, Anna Wright Williams (1872-1961), would marry her cousin Armistead Peter, Jr. (1870-1960), in 1894. After his dismissal from the army, Major Laurence Abert Williams struggled to be honorably restored to the rolls of the army. He and his wife eventually separated; he died in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1879.

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Major Laurence Abert Williams Papers
MS-12

Series Description

CORRESPONDENCE

Series

CORRESPONDENCE

1847-1874, scattered

Six letters, including one from E. J. Peter written from Montevideo in 1847, a note written ca. 1848-1852 by William Orton Williams, and letters from General Braxton Bragg, F. J. Porter, Dr. W. T. Howard, and Martha (Williams) Carter. General Braxton Bragg's letter describes the death of Major Laurence Abert Williams' father, Captain William George Williams, in the battle of Monterey, Mexico. In 1863 F.J. Porter congratulates Major Laurence Abert Williams on his marriage and extends his sympathy upon the death of his brother. The 1874 letter of Dr. Howard certifies that Major Laurence Abert Williams has pulmonary consumption. An undated letter by Martha (Williams) Carter discusses lands owned by Williams in Illinois and Michigan.

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

1842

One letter written by Laurence Abert Williams while he was studying at Mr. Hollister's school in Troy, Michigan, to his grandfather, William Williams. Mr. Hollister adds a postscript in which he discusses Williams.

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE: COPIES

1875; ND

Copies of letters written by Major Laurence Abert Williams to be reinstated on the rolls of the United States Army.

CORRESPONDENCE: COPIES

1875-1878, scattered

Copies of letters written on the behalf of Major Laurence Abert Williams to be reinstated on the rolls of the United States Army.

SUBJECT FILES

Series

EDUCATION: KINSLEY'S ACADEMY

1843

An account statement and a school report.

EDUCATION: MR. DENNISON'S SCHOOL
1844

Account statements and receipts.

EDUCATION: GEORGETOWN COLLEGE
1844-1847

Account statements, letters from school officials, and school reports.

EDUCATION: ALEXANDRIA BOARDING SCHOOL
1848

LITERARY PRODUCTIONS

Series

A BILL TO REPLACE MAJOR LAURENCE ABERT WILLIAMS ON
THE ROLLS OF THE ARMY

ND

Handwritten draft.

PETITION OF MAJOR LAURENCE ABERT WILLIAMS: DRAFTS
1875

Handwritten drafts.

PETITION OF MAJOR LAURENCE ABERT WILLIAMS: DRAFTS
1875

Handwritten drafts.

PETITION OF MAJOR LAURENCE ABERT WILLIAMS
1877

Printed petition addressed to the Senate and House requesting restoration to
the rolls of the United States Army.

SPEECH TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: DRAFT
1875

SPEECH TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: DRAFT
Ca.1877

Handwritten draft.

NOTE

ND

A handwritten extract from Major Laurence Abert Williams' entry;
Cullum, George Washington. *Biographical Register of the Officers and
Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York,
from its establishment in 1802-1890.*

PRINTED MATERIAL

Series

PRINTED CIRCULARS

1863; 1876

Printed in connection with Major Laurence Abert Williams petition for restoration to the rolls of the United States Army.

CONGRESSIONAL ROSTERS

1875-1876

Lists of Senators, Representatives, and Senate and House Committees.

Series

LABEL

1852

Label: L. A. Williams, U. S. A., Newport, Kentucky

MS-12
Box 1

Folder		
1	Education: Kinsley's Academy	1842-1843
2	Education: Mr. Dennison's School	1844
3	Education: Georgetown College	1844-1847
4	Education: Alexandria Boarding School	1848
5	Outgoing Correspondence: William Williams	1842
6	Correspondence	1847-1874; ND
7	Correspondence: General Braxton Bragg to Major Laurence Abert Williams	1854
8	Outgoing Correspondence: Copies	1875; ND
9	Correspondence: On Behalf of Major Laurence Abert Williams, Copies	1862-1878, scattered
10	<i>A Bill to Replace to Laurence A. Williams, late Major of the 6th Cavalry, U.S. Army, upon The Rolls of the Army, Draft</i>	ND
11	Petition: Major Laurence Abert Williams, Drafts	ND
12	Petition: Major Laurence Abert Williams, Drafts	ND
13	War Department, Adjutant General's Office: Notes	Aug 7, 1861
14	Cullum, George Washington. <i>Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, from its establishment in 1802-1890</i> : Extract, entry for Major Laurence Abert Williams, Number 1571, Copy [Unknown Hand]	ND
15	Report: House of Representatives, The Committee on Military Affairs, 44 th Congress, 1 st Session	1876
16	Congressional Rosters: Standing and Select Committees of The House of Representatives of the United States, 44 th Congress, 1 st Session; List of Committees of The Senate of the United States, 46 th Congress, 1 st Session; List of Senators of the First Session, Forty-Third Congress	1875; 1879; ND
17	Label: Newport, Kentucky	1852