Virden family papers
1783–1901
(bulk dates 1820s–1860s)

Abstract: This collection relates to the Virden (or Virdin) family of Delaware, specifically Samuel Virden (1793–1876) of Kent County and his descendants. Samuel's children and their spouses also figure prominently in this collection. The Virden family papers, spanning the years 1783–1901, consist of thirty-six letters, receipts, deeds, accounts, and other documents.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 489
Creator: Virden family.
Title: Virden family papers
Inclusive Dates: 1783–1901
Bulk Dates: 1820s–1860s
Extent: .33 linear feet (1 box and several oversized items)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 489, Virden family papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Box 1: Shelved in SPEC MSS manuscript boxes (1 inch); Removals: Shelved in SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches)

Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/


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Biographical Note

This collection relates to the Virden (or Virdin) family of Delaware, specifically Samuel Virden (1793–1876) of Kent County and his descendants, including Edwin Virden, Sarah Elizabeth Virden Hall, and her husband John W. Hall, Jr. The Brown family, connected by marriage to the Virdens, is also represented.

Samuel Virden's great-grandfather, John Virdin (d. 1769), was among the earliest Virdens in Delaware. Samuel was born on June 21, 1793, the only child of Peter Lowber Virden and Elizabeth (Lowber) Virden. His first wife was Anne McKimmey Smock Virden (1797–1841), with whom he had eleven children. The family lived near Frederica on a farm called Lexington Mills, and later moved to a home on David Street in Frederica. In October 1842, ten months after Anne's death, Samuel married Eliza Anne Warren (d. 1878). He died in July of 1876 and was buried in a family cemetery at Lexington Mills.

Samuel's children and their spouses also figure prominently in this collection, particularly John W. Hall, Jr., the husband of Samuel's daughter, Sarah Elizabeth ("Lizzie"). John W. Hall, Jr., son of Delaware governor John Wood Hall (1817–1892, served as governor 1879–1883), became a successful businessman after taking over his father's mercantile firm in 1867. Records from the Hall family's shipping firm can be found among the collections of the University of Delaware Library (MSS 116).

The Brown family also appears in this collection. Samuel Virden's granddaughter, Blanche Virden, married Dr. Thomas A. Brown, and perhaps this is the source of the Brown family material. Their daughter was the renowned Delaware artist Ethel Penniwell Brown Leach, whose niece, Mrs. Samuel Sloan, donated this collection to the University.

Sources:


Selected Virden Family Genealogy

I Samuel Virden (1793–1876) m.1 Anne McKimmey Smock (1797–1841)

The couple had eleven children listed below.

m.2 Eliza Anne Warren (d. 1878)

A McKimmey Smock Virden (1818–1849)

B Peter Lowber Smock Virden (b. 1818) m. Emma Closey

The couple had five children, including Blanche Virden, listed below.

1 Blanche Virden m. Dr. Thomas Brown.

The couple had three children, including Delaware artist Ethel Penniwell Brown Leach.

C Elizabeth Lowber Virden (1820–1832)
D. Luiza Morris Virden (1823–1823)
E. Edwin Virden (1823–1899)
F. Anna Smock Virden (1824–1892) m. George Sullivan
G. Ruth Anna Virden (1826–1916) m. Alexander Virden (cousin)
H. Samuel Virden (1829–1902)
I. Sarah Elizabeth ("Lizzie") Virden (b. 1833) m. John W. Hall, Jr. (son of the Delaware Governor)
J. James Alexander Virden (1836–1837)
K. Adaline Lowber Virden (1838–1838)
Scope and Content Note

The Virden family papers, spanning the years 1783–1901, consist of thirty-six letters, receipts, deeds, accounts, and other documents, mostly relating to the family of Samuel Virden of Kent County. Although the papers do not provide a well-rounded portrait of the Virden family, some of the estate papers, receipts, and letters can provide a rough estimation of Samuel Virden's business and financial dealings when considered together.

Some of the most noteworthy documents in the collection, however, have a historical significance discrete from the Virden family. These include an anonymous Revolutionary War era account book of household earnings and expenditures; several expressive letters written by the young Virden sisters and their friends between 1840–1862; an 1864 letter to John W. Hall detailing Civil War hostilities near City Point, Virginia; Edwin Virden's 1865 letter regarding life in post-Civil War Jackson, Mississippi; and a letter to Peter Lowber Smock Virden regarding Delaware politics during the free silver controversy of 1896.

The collection came to the University of Delaware in 1963 from Mrs. Samuel Sloan, a descendant of Samuel Virden through Blanche Virden Brown. Several items in this collection bear no obvious relation to the Virden family, and may have been grouped with the collection after its donation. Records indicate that the Virden family papers originally consisted of just twenty items, dating from 1820–1866.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Virden family.

Brown family.

Topical Terms

Families--Delaware--History--19th century--Sources.

Businesspeople--Delaware--History--19th century--Sources.

Shipping--Delaware--History--19th century--Sources.

Geographic Names

Kent County (Del.)--Sources.

Form/Genre Terms

Receipts (financial records)

Ledgers (account books)

Personal correspondence.

Commercial correspondence.

Deeds.

Bonds (legal records)

Ships' logs.

Recipes.

Occupation

Businesspeople.

Personal Contributors

Virden, Samuel (1793-1876)

Virden, Sarah Elizabeth (b. 1833)
Virden, Edwin (1823-1899)

Hall, John Wood, Jr.

Brown family.

**Related Materials in this Repository**

MSS 116, John Wood Hall Shipping Papers
Business papers of Delaware governor and lumber merchant John Wood Hall and his son, John Wood Hall, Jr. John W. Hall, Jr. married Sarah Elizabeth ("Lizzie") Virden in 1877. Like the Virden family papers, this collection came to the University in 1963 from Mrs. Samuel Sloan.
Arrangement

The materials in the collection are organized in chronological order.
**Detailed Description of the Collection**

Account book, 1783–1787 [Box 1 F1]

Unidentified author. Includes details of payments made for wood, brandy, tobacco, shoes, and other goods, as well as incoming credits for weaving, spinning, cutting wood, and other work. Includes many transactions with "negroes."

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Receipt for Robert Young/Yong's Delaware taxes, 1816 April 24 [Box 1 F2]

Bond between John Coon and Samuel Verden, 1818 [Box 1 F2]

Account of Samuel Virden against estate of William Virden, 1821 January 23 [Box 1 F2]

Sale agreement between Samuel Virden and Samuel Warren, 1823 March 5 [Box 1 F2]

Document naming Samuel Virden as the administrator of the estate of Elizabeth Virden, 1824 May 20 [Box 1 F2] (Shelved in SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches))

Deed between Caleb Barratt and Sarah Harrington, 1825 December 29 [Box 1 F2]

Receipt to Samuel Virden from Job Townsend, 1826 February 4 [Box 1 F3]

Regarding the estate of Robert Young and the purchase of white oak planks.

Letter from William Jackson to Samuel Virden, 1826 September 24 [Box 1 F3]

Regarding the estate of Peter Smock.

Receipt to Samuel Virden from Solomon Townsend, 1827 February 13 [Box 1 F3]

Receipt to Samuel Virden from Solomon Townsend, 1831 March 16 [Box 1 F3]

Receipt to Samuel Virden from Solomon Townsend, 1832 November 16 [Box 1 F3]

For Job Townsend.

Receipt to Samuel Virden, 1832 December 1 [Box 1 F3]

For a subscription to the *Delaware State Journal*.

Scrap of an order between John Scott, William Saulsbury, and Samuel [Virden], 1833 [Box 1 F3]

Letter to the Virden family from Anna Smock Virden and Ruth Anna Virden, 1840 August 16 [Box 1 F3]

Letter to Ruth Anna Virden from her schoolmate Mary S. Paster, 1841 June 10 [Box 1 F3]
Receipt to Samuel Virden from A. Whiteley, 1843 December 20 [Box 1 F3]

Deed to Thomas Brown from Sarah Brown, Samuel A. Short and wife, William C. Brown and wife, 1845 December 13 [Box 1 F3]

Receipt to Samuel Virden and Nathaniel Young from Jonathan Carrow, 1849 January 24 [Box 1 F4]

Letter to Sarah Elizabeth ("Lizzie") Virden from Philena [Peterson], 1862 February 22 [Box 1 F4]

Regarding Washington's birthday, the marriage of the Swedish opera star Jenny Lind, and other lighthearted news.

Fictional "Log of Yacht Nettle on an excursion down Delaware Bay commencing on Tuesday Nov. 19th 1862", 1862 [Box 1 F4]

Fictional ship's log.

Account of sales to John W. Hall from Jas. L. Benley Co., 1863 September 7 [Box 1 F4]

Regarding the sloop Golden Gale.

Letter to Samuel Virden R. Y. Townsend, 1864 March 16 [Box 1 F4]

Regarding business opportunities.

Letter to Mr. Hall from N. W. Lawson, 1864 August 17 [Box 1 F4]

Regarding hostile encounters with Confederate soldiers during a mercantile expedition near City Point, Virginia.

Bill to John W. Hall from Henry Frederick's Building, House Keeping, and Agricultural Hardware Warehouse, 1864 September 30 [Box 1 F4]

Letter from Edwin Virden to Father [ ], a Methodist priest in Frederica, Delaware, 1865 September 24 [Box 1 F4]

Edwin is living on a plantation in Jackson, Mississippi with his brother, Samuel Virden, Jr. and his sisters Anna and Ruth. He offers commentary on the post-Civil War South and broad condemnation of the "indolent," "stealing" former slaves.

Deed to Thomas Brown from Edward and Hester Anderson, 1860 April 28 [Box 1 F4]

Signed April 20, 1860; recorded September 4, 1866.

Letter to [Sarah H. Hall Lester] from John W. Hall, Jr., 1887 June 15 [Box 1 F5]

Regarding the death of Rachel Whiteley. See also letters dated February 29, 1892, and May 1, 1901.
Deed to Thomas A. Brown from Joseph and Catharine Brown, 1890 March 11 [Box 1 F5]

Signed March 11, 1890; recorded April 15, 1890.

Typescript of legal judgement, 1892 February 1 [Box 1 F5]

Regarding the breach of charter lawsuit between John W. Hall and Hugh Kelly, written by J. Brown.

Letter to [Sarah H. Hall Lester] from John W. Hall, Jr., 1892 February 29 [Box 1 F5]

Regarding finding men to work on their vessels.

Deed to Sarah E. Brown from Joseph and Catharine Brown, James and Susan A. Quillin, Thomas A. and Mary B. Brown, and Mary L. Brown, 1881 April 20 [Box 1 F5] (Shelved in SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches))

Signed April 20, 1881; recorded September 23, 1895. Recorded by James Virden.

Letter to Peter Lowber Smock Virden from Dr. D. W. Mott, 1896 August 17 [Box 1 F5]

Regarding Democratic politics during the free silver controversy.

Letter to [Sarah H. Hall Lester] from John W. Hall, Jr., 1901 May 1 [Box 1 F5]

Regarding the health of his wife, business matters, and other news.

Scrap of a legal document involving J. Brown and Major Townsend, undated [Box 1 F5]

Recipes, undated [Box 1 F5]

One sheet containing recipes for peach cream, orange cream, bisque, and stewed prunes.