

The Correspondence of
Joseph H. DeGrange (1839-1926)
and
Ellen McMillan DeGrange (1842-1910)

Edited by
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Introduction

This is an edition of correspondence of Joseph H. DeGrange (1839-1926) and his wife, Ellen McMillan DeGrange (1842-1910), along with other documents kept by their family.¹ The letters were passed on to their daughter Helen DeGrange McLellan, then to her daughter Helen Pitard, who in turn passed them on to those still living. There are various items, from brief notes and receipts to long letters. They cover the years 1809 to 1869. Perhaps the most accessible and interesting part to us today comprises a series of letters preserved from a trip DeGrange took to New York and Boston during the summer of 1869 (items 34 to 56).

The earliest document (item 1, and see Appendix E) is an apparently "official" copy of a birth certificate for "Isabel Narcisa," who was born on 29 October 1803 in Santiago, Cuba, and baptized there in the Metropolitan Cathedral on 9 November. Her parents are named as "Juan Buison" and "Susana Laurren." Isabel is Joseph DeGrange's mother, who perhaps had this copy made to take to Louisiana as a form of identification. In the 1880 census, Joseph DeGrange notes that his mother was born in Cuba, and his father (Jacques DeGrange) was born in France.² There is also a silver napkin ring with the name "Isabel" engraved on it which may have been hers. The reason we know that these are DeGrange's parents comes from records in the Diocese of New Orleans, where Susana Laurent and "Ysaval Narcisa Mouchon" appear on the baptismal record for Benjamin Mouchon (bpt. Nov. 23, 1820, when he was 18)—Susana and "Jean" are named as his parents. The reason why "Buison" appears on the birth certificate and "Mouchon" appears in this (and several other) baptismal records is a mystery, though this is clearly the same family. Many French families left Haiti for Santiago in Cuba during the slave revolts of the 1790s.³ The copy was made in 1809; if it was made to take to Louisiana as a form of

¹ I would like to thank Carolyn Jagot, another DeGrange family researcher (my one-half third cousin, descended from the marriage of Catherina Barbara Klipfel and Charles Fields), and Rita Curry-Pittman for their help with this biography, as well as, of course, my ancestors, living and dead, who preserved the correspondence.

² There is a New Orleans death record identifying Jacques' death on October 4, 1861 at age 57, which gives his approximate birth year.

³ In Benjamin's baptismal record, his parents are identified as "Jean, Geneva Switzerland" and "Susana Laurent, Barader, Les Baraderes on Santo Domingo." This, then, gives her parents' origins; Baradere is a town on what is now Haiti.

identification, this also gives a possible immigration date for the family, just after the Louisiana Purchase.

After this, while the letters especially concern Joseph DeGrange, they seem to have been kept by his wife. The next several documents in the file concern Ellen McMillan's family. Another series of documents and letters kept by this family, written to Ellen McMillan's mother Barbara Klipfel about an inheritance scandal in France, is the subject of another study.⁴ The correspondence edited here begins in 1839 with several receipts kept by John McMillan, Ellen McMillan's father, from some time after his arrival in New Orleans from New York.⁵ There are several property tax receipts (items 3-7) and another receipt for what seems like a loan (item 2). They show that the family lived at the time in Jefferson Parish, which abuts Orleans Parish and the city, and which over the course of the next century was progressively co-opted by the city.⁶ A later note (item 9) seems to indicate that they sold this property in 1859.

Ellen McMillan, John's daughter, met and married Joseph H. DeGrange in Louisiana.⁷ DeGrange was born in New Orleans, the son of immigrants. As mentioned above, his entry in the 1880 census indicates that he was the son of French and maybe Spanish immigrants.⁸ The family was therefore part of the Creole subculture which has added such flavor to New Orleans' history. This group is to be distinguished from Cajuns, the Acadian French settlers who arrived in Louisiana from Nova Scotia. Creoles have their origins in the Louisiana settlements of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the term is most narrowly identified with the ethnic blends (combining African, Native American, and European groups) which grew out of the Cane River farmlands near Natchitoches and New Orleans' 7th Ward. A strict ethnic or geographical definition does not hold over time, however. While modern usage varies, the traditional Louisiana meaning of "Creole" can signify people of mixed racial descent or not. New

⁴ See "The Nehweiler Inheritance," downloadable as a .pdf from the <pitard.net>.

⁵ I have not been able to find any information about John McMillan's family.

⁶ The receipts give plot numbers for the land which might be tracked down on contemporary maps.

⁷ I still, by the way, do not know what "H." stands for as his middle name. I assume "Henry," since that is the name of his oldest son.

⁸ See Appendix A for a full description of the family's descent.

Orleanians of European descent, of African descent, and of mixed descent all claim the label. It is a classic American ethnic identity whose history has over time both abided by and ignored racial distinctions to create a unique and dynamic cultural history. The DeGrange family arrived in America at the latter end of this history: Ellen McMillan's maternal grandparents arrived from Alsace in 1817,⁹ and DeGrange's parents also apparently arrived shortly after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803; presumably, however, these families had moved there because they saw a community with which they could identify.

The earliest record of DeGrange himself is his marriage.¹⁰ He married Ellen McMillan on December 10, 1859 in New Orleans. Soon afterwards, the Civil War began. At the time of his enlistment, on May 26th, 1861, his occupation is listed as a "clerk."¹¹ He was mustered in to the 2nd Battalion of the famous Washington Artillery as a 1st Sergeant. Companies 1 to 4 of the Washington Artillery were sent off from New Orleans on May 27th with much pomp and circumstance, wearing their distinctive uniforms of gray and blue splashed with red kepis, collars, and cuffs.¹² This is the scene as William Owens, another Washington Artillery veteran, describes it in the autobiography of his own service:

On the 26th of May, 1861,--a bright Sabbath morning,--the four batteries, in their showy uniforms, bearing aloft the silken colors, the gift of the ladies, marched and then formed in double file in Lafayette Square. [. . .] It was an impressive scene; the square was densely packed with the friends and families of the young soldiers. After the ceremony of being mustered in was concluded, the command was marched through the streets to Christ Church, which ancient and sacred edifice was filled to its utmost capacity by the immediate families and friends of

⁹ Cornelia Schrader-Muggenthaler, The Alsace Emigration Book (Apollo, PA: Closson P, 1989-91) 1.____; noted by Jean-Marie Klipfel (no relation), letter to C. Jagot, 9 November 1997.

¹⁰ According to his obituary, he was educated privately at home, so there would be no school records; "Col. DeGrange Dead after Long Utilities Work," The Times Picayune 21 December 1926, p__, col. 1.

¹¹ Military Service Records; see Appendix C; Andrew B. Booth, Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers and Louisiana Confederate Commands (New Orleans, 1920) 1.581. His age at enlistment is given as 25, which would place him as being born in 1836—I assume this is an error. Booth gives this entry:

the departing soldiers, and by the Battalion. Their colors were distinguished by being placed against the chancel rail. The venerable Dr. Leacock, Rector of Christ Church, delivered a most eloquent address, which impressed profoundly all who were present. Suppressed sobs of mothers, sisters, wives, and sweethearts were audible throughout the church. He enjoined all to remember that they were educated to be gentlemen. [. . .] After the discourse the colors were held aloft before the altar, and the benediction was pronounced, the entire assembly rising to their feet, roused to the highest pitch of hope, patriotism, and enthusiasm" (8-9).

Owens lists J.H. DeGrange on the day as "First Sergeant" of the Second Company (10n).

On June 27, however, which was just after the battalions had arrived at Manassas Junction, DeGrange was "reduced to ranks," that is, demoted to the "ranks" as a private. The demotion could have happened for a variety of reasons, ranging from his personal request to being court-martialed; his service record leaves no record of why.¹³ After this his record places him at several engagements that year, including Bull Run and Manassas (in July), Munson's Hill (in August), Hall's Hill, and two engagements at Lewinsville (all in September).¹⁴ This was, however, the extent of his service. He was discharged in December of 1861 from Camp Hollins (in Virginia, between Centerville and Bull Run) because he had procured a substitute (named C.A.D. Theineman) to serve in his place. There is no record of his precise reason; if being reduced to ranks was for disciplinary reasons, he may have been having a miserable time and wanted out. It is hard, however, to avoid the conclusion that family obligations were pulling at his emotions: his mother had died in August, his father died just two months later in October,

¹² The uniforms are on apparently display in the Confederate Memorial Hall in New Orleans, <<http://www.confederatemuseum.com/>>. In 1862 they were altered to gray, to distinguish the men from the Union troops.

¹³ While DeGrange's obituary mentions that he served on the staff of "Colonel" Richardson, this couldn't have happened until the post-war era; Richardson was a Lt. in the 1st Company in 1861, and not the Battalion's commander until after the war. His pocket diary is preserved in the Museum of the Confederacy, and edited in John Coski, ed., "On the Field and On the Town with the Washington Artillery," *Civil War Regiments* 5.1 (1996): 92-154.

and sometime during the previous year, in 1860, his first child had been born.¹⁵ According to his obituary, his father had been a successful merchant, but DeGrange "returned [from the War] to New Orleans to find the family fortune badly depleted."¹⁶

Whatever his record, his service was to form an important phase of his life. In one example, well after the war, "J.H. Degrange" appears as a member of the "Beauregard Monument Association." Louisiana native and Creole General P.G.T. Beauregard was in 1861 the overall commander of the Army of the Potomac, and was thus a hometown hero.¹⁷ Generals Beauregard, Johnston, and Gustavus Smith visited Camp Hollins frequently during the fall of 1861.¹⁸ The Association existed between 1893, just after Beauregard's death, and 1915 in order to build the statue of the General which still stands in the New Orleans City Park. The President of this association was Alden McLellan, himself a veteran, whose brother Charles McLellan had also served with some distinction in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.¹⁹ The Association's Executive Committee also features some notable personages among Confederate veterans. Andrew B. Booth compiled what is still a definitive list of Louisiana Confederate soldiers (see note 11, above). Katie Walker Behan and her husband William J. Behan are both listed; he had been a member of the Washington Artillery, and she was instrumental in developing the collection of the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, VA.²⁰ This

¹⁴ Military Service Records. At Manassas he is described as "on Duty over Baggage" and "absent on special duty."

¹⁵ George Edward was born on 11 December 1862, but there seems to be no New Orleans record for the birth of Henry Snodgrass, who must have been born in about 1860, since his age is given as "31" when he married Marie Bozant in 1891.

¹⁶ "Col. DeGrange Dead."

¹⁷ Colonel J.E.B. Stuart was the commander under Beauregard at Munson's Hill and Lewinsville. Captain (later Major General) Thomas Lafayette Rosser was in charge of the 2nd Company of the Washington Artillery at all three of these battles.

¹⁸ Coski, "On the Field" 99; also see the narrative in Owens, *In Camp and Battle*, ch. 3.

¹⁹ See Appendix F for an image of the dedication ceremony and a list of the Executive Committee. Alden and Charles were both sons of W.H.P. McLellan and Leonora Levensvaler, who had immigrated to New Orleans from Maine. Charles W. McLellan (1842-1864) had a distinguished war record, rising through the ranks to become a Captain in the 15th Louisiana Volunteer Infantry. He was killed on June 1, 1864 by a sniper at Cold Harbor, just two days before the awful Union charge. He is buried in Lafayette Cemetery. The fullest history of the Louisiana Infantry (though not the Artillery), including the 15th Volunteers, is Terry L. Jones, *Lee's Tigers: The Louisiana Infantry in the Army of Northern Virginia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1987).

²⁰ Coski, "On the Field" 93. "Gen. W.T. Behan" also appears as one of the honorary pallbearers at JHD's funeral.

Association also provides an instance of the domestic effect caused by the immense disruption of the Civil War: one might guess that DeGrange's daughter Helen and Alden McLellan's son Asahel, who were married in 1896, met (or, more likely, were introduced) before or during the last decade of the century through the connections made between the older generation of Civil War veterans.²¹

There is no mention of DeGrange's service in this correspondence, and only four rather oblique references to the War (see items 16, 32, 37, and 49; also, maybe, the "excitement" in item 17). The first is a rather intriguing note written to DeGrange by someone named James E. Dunham. This letter is curious for more than just what the secret knowledge DeGrange might learn "to his advantage." It was written during September of 1862, after he had ended his service in the Confederate army. New Orleans had been captured in late April of 1862 by the Union, so the city was run by the Union at the time, which perhaps explains the fact that this note is on stationery that bears the State Seal of Louisiana.²²

This note raises a question: what was DeGrange's allegiance during the war? Could he have been a so-called "Union man"? There is much compelling evidence against this. He had volunteered for service in a unit which had declared its loyalty Confederate cause. He was a member of the Washington Artillery Battalion until the end of his life, rising through its ranks to become a Colonel. While his wife's family was from the North, and he had found a substitute for his military service, this is not a good indication of allegiance during the war, in which many families were split. Alden McLellan, mentioned earlier, was born in Maine, yet the McLellans seem to have been quite strongly supportive of the Confederate cause. Those who felt the strongest need to fight against slavery made their way north, and some did, but DeGrange did not. From this perspective, one might read Dunham's note as a guess rather than proof of

²¹ The McLellans, like DeGrange in his later years, worked as ship chandlers. McLellan documents related to their business are preserved in the Tulane Manuscripts Department as the "McLellan Papers, 1839-1884, Manuscripts Collection 629."

²² A Private James E. Dunham was in the 2nd Company, 31st Regiment of the Massachusetts Infantry, This was the first Union regiment to occupy New Orleans, and remained in the area until January of 1863.

Union allegiance—that is, the phrase "provided that D is a Union man" may be a query, meaning that Dunham is not sure whether DeGrange is a Union man or not.

Yet given the question the note raises, any of these bits of evidence might be questioned. If you did not volunteer for Confederate service, they knocked on your door and you were shamed into joining, or even outright forced to do so. DeGrange had been reduced to ranks, and then found a substitute to get out; maybe he was ambivalent, or really didn't support the cause. This may have been because of his family, but perhaps not. Sympathies were often decided, one must suppose, out of necessity rather than principle. The Union occupation was devastating to the economy of New Orleans, so making connections with Union officials may then have also been a matter of need. What about his later, close contacts with other Confederate veterans (more on which below)? After the war, it was a matter of financial and social survival to join Confederate organizations (and this still is true, to an extent).

All sorts of theories are possible, but the simplest answer to the question in either case, to apply Occam's razor, is probably simple practicality. The best theory is perhaps that DeGrange went along, during and after the war, to the extent that he felt he needed to, but that in the end, his political allegiances were determined largely his personal, familial, and financial needs and desires—something probably true of many who have served in many wars—rather than a burning desire to rebel against the Union.

Given the lack of firm evidence from DeGrange's hand, the story behind the note remains a mystery. Other social connections are more decipherable. "Ned Apps" appears in several letters from DeGrange's trip to Boston and New York (items 44 and 50); one item is written by Apps himself (item 41). This is George Edward Apps (1838-1895), known as Ned or Ed, who served in the 4th Company of the Washington Artillery. He enlisted as a Sergeant on May 26th, 1861—the same date as DeGrange—and rose to be a Captain by the end of the war. Some of Apps' own correspondence survives. During the war he wrote a number of letters to a woman named Josephine Brode Trinchard, who was the sister of a man named Fred A. Brode. Brode also enlisted on May 26th, 1861 as a Private in the 4th Company of the Washington

Artillery, was promoted to Corporal in 1863, and served until he was ultimately paroled at Appomattox. DeGrange knew him too, since he appears in another of the more intriguing of DeGrange's letters: in 1860 "F.A. Brode" wrote a letter to DeGrange alluding to a falling out which, he hoped, had been resolved (item 10). The letter attests to DeGrange's generosity. Brode's own letters home during the war, to his sister, also survive.²³ These three men, then, were apparently well acquainted. Brode and Apps were quite good friends from before the war, as is evident by their letters to Brode's sister. He was clearly quite a close friend of the DeGranges. DeGrange entrusts him with the sale of a house on Carondelet Street (see also item 44), and he sends his wife to him for money if she needs it during his trip North. And he is called "Eddie" by Ellen (item 50); their letters address other acquaintances by "Mr.," or just their last names.

These social connections were important for DeGrange's later business. His letter to Apps and a later letter from Ellen (item 46) together indicate one of the ways in which he earned his living, by renting, and maybe buying and selling, real estate. But this was not, it would seem, his main line of work. Several letters imply that he worked for a merchandising firm or, perhaps, a bank called McKelroy and Bradford, probably during the war (items 15, 23, and 32). The bank seems to have gone broke, probably during the War when New Orleans was impoverished because of the Union occupation. The letters ask him to help the writers to recover lost funds, and for his help for Mr. Bradford.

In March of 1868, DeGrange was admitted to the firm of Montgomery and Brothers & Co. as a partner.²⁴ They are described on its letterhead as "Auctioneers and Commission Merchants," and were located downtown at 87 Camp Street.²⁵ He seems to have worked there

²³ Apps' and Brode's letters are preserved in the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia, and are edited in Coski, "On the Field." The article includes pictures of Apps and Brode. Josephine Brode Trinchard married, at age 16, F.B. Trinchard, who in 1863 joined Company E of the 2nd Battalion of the Alabama Infantry.

²⁴ Daily Picayune 1 March 1868, p5 c6.

²⁵ This is not necessarily the same address as what 87 Camp Street is today; originally, this would have been the 87th structure up Camp Street as you left Canal headed up river. Between 1894 and 1896, addresses were changed to reflect what block you were on (thanks to Rita-Curry-Pittman for this information).

for a couple of years before this, however, as the envelopes to New Orleans that survive from 1866 onwards are addressed "c/o B.J. Montgomery." They were resellers of various goods, especially furniture.²⁶ Several items from before his trip to the northeast (nos. 18-21, 26-31) may concern his business with the firm, though it seems possible—because they were kept by him—that they are records of personal investments.²⁷ These receipts also document sales of cotton, not furniture. The second set of receipts document a financial loss, which might be they were kept. DeGrange's finances were apparently in increasingly rough shape as the 1860s wore on.

He had other responsibilities in New Orleans. A note enclosed by Ellen announcing his trip to the north (in item 35) says that is "a member in the State Legislature."²⁸ He was very involved in the Fire Department in New Orleans. Item 25 records that in 1865, he petitioned the Board of Commissioners for some matter as a member of "Jackson Fire Co. No 18."²⁹ This is on the letterhead of the "Fireman's Charitable Association of New Orleans," which is what the city fire department was known as between its founding in 1829 and 1891 when it was organized into the city government as the New Orleans Fire Department.³⁰

For all of these details gleaned from official records and histories, the experience of moving from them to the family letters is remarkable, and fleshes out his personality immensely. Those we have were written between him and his wife on a trip to New York and Boston in June and July 1869. The trip to New York does not seem directly connected with the business of Montgomery brothers, since the same note (in item 35) which lists him as a member

²⁶ In item 51, DeGrange records a visit to the Kelhams in Manchester, Mass., who were furniture dealers.

²⁷ One of the correspondents of these notes is "W.P. Converse" (items 18-21). This is William Porter Converse, on whom see Charles A. Converse, *The Converse Family and Allied Families* (Philadelphia, 1905) 303-06. He lived in New Orleans from 1839 to 1854, after which he moved to Connecticut. After this, he opened W.P. Converse & Co. in New York City, which "did a large importing and commission business, were wholesalers of drugs and chemicals, long a leading house in that line of business, and of notably high standing in the commercial world" (Converse 304). He was briefly arrested during the War for being a Confederate sympathizer, but was released on order of President Lincoln.

²⁸ I have not, however, been able to verify his membership in the state government, and no later description of his life seems to mention it.

²⁹ Another of the petitioners is "Shearer," presumably the same as the "D.L. Shearer" who accompanied him on his 1869 trip to the northeast. I can't identify him beyond this, however.

³⁰ One of the later letters (item 54), written to him in Boston by someone who only identifies himself as "Alfred," may concern the Fire Department, though the letter is very unclear—it may also apply to his connections with the Washington Artillery.

of the State Legislature also describes him as "recently" a part of the firm. His trip was via train, leaving on July 16th or 17th (see item 51). He went first to Niagara Falls where he was on June 19th and 20th with T.M. Converse, his wife, and D.L. Shearer (see item 39).³¹ From there he went to New York. He remained there until July 1st, and left for Boston that evening (see item 40), arriving in Boston the next day. Some of his first letters home especially describe his time touring. He describes his visit to New York during the age of Boss Tweed, seeing Central Park and the tenements in Manhattan (item 39). He arrived in Boston in time for the Fourth of July Celebrations, which were held, to his amusement at "puratanical" Boston, on the 5th because the 4th fell on a Sunday that year. The entertainments included "boat racing," seeing Bunker Hill, Cambridge and other towns around Boston, and the State Penitentiary (items 43 and 44; penitentiaries and asylums were not then unusual stops for tourists). Later in the month he took an overnight trip up the coast north of Boston to Manchester, Gloucester, and Cape Ann (item 51). These diversions seem to exhaust their attractiveness, however; his letters by the end of the month express nothing as much as his boredom, missing his family, and the lack of success he is having in his "business" (or, as everyone spells it, "buisness") there.

He is very circumspect about what exactly his business is. Ellen clearly knows what it is and encourages him in it, though she too is silent on specifics, obviously following his lead (see item 50, for instance). B.M. Montgomery (apparently the brother of B.J. Montgomery), however, does speak of it, and has a key role in it. B.M., the "old man," travels from New Orleans to New York by train in early July, writing two encouraging letters from Cincinnati along the way (items 42 and 45), and arriving on July 12th (sans luggage—see item 47). In item 42, he indicates that they are working together to start up a bank; DeGrange's obituary mentions that at this

³¹ T.M. Converse seems to be Thomas Montgomery Converse, a brother of the William P. Converse of items 19-21. Thomas was married in 1845 to Jane Agnes Sherman of Massachusetts, and worked for his brother in New Orleans (Converse 320-21). According to his biography,

He was a Union man, and at the close of the war, he was urged to accept nomination as Mayor of New Orleans on the Citizens ticket, in the belief that he could harmonize both the Union and Secession elements; but, having no taste for politics, he declined these solicitations. After the close of the war he was for three years in the wholesale flour business in New Orleans; and, afterwards, for some years, a cotton factor there (Converse 320).

time he "established a brokerage concern of his own."³² He is apparently visiting the financial markets in the northeast to find investors. He is not, however, having any success, and by the time Montgomery arrives, DeGrange seems thoroughly dejected (item 53).

He complains several times that he is having a hard time raising investors. More than that, he is clearly impatient with the lack of results (see for instance item 39). This is not for lack of emotional support: his wife encourages him (item 48), and B.M. Montgomery does too (item 45). He at one point mentions this to one of his traveling companions, Mr. Shearer, who also encourages him to stay the course—and adds that if this venture didn't work out, others might offer themselves in the process (item 44). The travelers are at the time hobnobbing with the "money'd men"—the "educational aristocracy" and the "moneyed aristocracy" of Cambridge—which DeGrange says is his one consolation for having such a bad time. Shearer seems here to be reminding DeGrange that networking might be just as valuable a goal of the trip as an actual commitment to invest, though DeGrange seems to be having a hard time with this, or at least this is what he tells his "Conscience," as he calls his wife (item 44). His obituary confirms that the trip was a financial loss; it mentions that his brokerage firm "failed, and Colonel DeGrange used of all his private assets in meeting his obligations." This was perhaps one the lowest times of his life, which might explain why the letters show a man private about his business, and maybe why they were preserved at all.³³

If the letters show a man worried and circumspect about his business, they also show a man very devoted to his family. He regularly express his affection for them, and obviously misses them more and more as his trip drags on. He had five children by the time he left for New York—which was no doubt part of the reason he fretted over the trip's lack of success. He finishes his letters, however, writing to seven children: "Henry, Eddy, Josey, Beney, Bella, Nellie, and Cousin Sarah" (item 44). Of these, the first five are his and Ellen's, in descending order by age (see Appendix A). The last two are not theirs: Ellen McMillan, whom he calls

³² "Col. DeGrange Dead."

³³ Another would surely have been in 1878, at the death of his daughter Isabella, "Bella" in the letters.

Nellie; and "Cousin Sarah." I presume Nellie lives with his family because she is so young, and he lists her at the end of his letters with the rest of his family—an added responsibility which surely weighed on him. Sarah on the other hand seems to just be visiting, according to her reference to "my family" in her letter, and her postscript (item 49). I cannot, however, identify who Nellie's and Sarah's actual parents might have been. Because of her last name Nellie must be from Ellen's family. In his letter of 10 July 1869 (item 44, and Appendix D.8), DeGrange includes a note addresses directly to Nellie which he signs as "Your Uncle." This note implies that she is the daughter of one of Ellen's siblings, and that she is less than about 10 years old. But, Ellen apparently had no siblings who survived their youth. Perhaps, then, Nellie is the daughter of one of Ellen's aunts or uncles, making her a cousin, and addressing him as "Uncle" is honorific, because of DeGrange's age. No last name is given for Cousin Sarah, and she may be descended from DeGrange or the McMillan side of the family. She would seem to be in her mid-teens: she is old enough not to be referred to among the "children" in item 50, and to model her own writing after trendy epistolary novels (item 49 is a wonderful read).

The correspondence ends with the trip. But, if the period of 1869 to 1870 was a low point in his life, it seems to have been a turning point. It was clearly a low point financially, and his family obligations were growing. But within the next year, he joined the "utility business," that is, the Canal and Claiborne Railroad, which ran street cars. He eventually succeeded to become the company's president, and would stay in this company, in its various incarnations, for the rest of his life. Over time the railroad combined with other city utilities, including electric and gaslight companies. A brief biography in a Souvenir pamphlet for the Washington Artillery from 1894 describes some of his responsibilities in the city at that time:

He is now secretary of the Canal and Claiborne R.R. Co., president of New Orleans Improvement Co., treasurer of the People's Homestead Association, Director of the Bank of Commerce, secretary of the National Automatic Fire Alarm Co., of La., and connected with many others; taking an active part in the

city welfare and administration, he occupies the position of president of the New Orleans Paid Fire Department.³⁴

DeGrange was on the Board of Fire Commissioners, and was apparently the first president of the New Orleans Fire Department in 1891 when it was incorporated into the city government.³⁵ By 1916, he was described as "the Vice-President of the New Orleans Railways Co. and all the subsidiary Street Railroad Companies."³⁶ He continued to serve until he was more than 80.³⁷

He also continued to expand his social commitments. He was a member of the New Orleans Chess, Checkers, and Whist club (joining in April of 1892), and the Pickwick Club (joining in December of 1895), both of which his son Dr. Joseph T. DeGrange also joined.³⁸ His membership in the Pickwick Club signifies his membership in the elite carnival "krewe" named "Rex." The Pickwick Club is where, during Mardi Gras, the Queen of Rex waits, on the balcony with her maids and retinue, for the King who stops the parade there to toast his Queen. He was a member of the local Elks organization.³⁹ He was President of the Board of Directors for the New Orleans Public Library.⁴⁰ And, he rose to become a Colonel in the Washington Artillery

³⁴ Washington Artillery Battalion of New Orleans, Washington Artillery Souvenir (New Orleans, ?1894).

³⁵ See the caption with his 1894 photograph (Appendix B). The image refers to him as "Col." because DeGrange continued to serve as a member of the Washington Artillery Battery in New Orleans—this was a Washington Artillery "alumni," not an actively serving US Army unit; he was a Colonel when he died. See also the Washington Artillery Souvenir. Alden McLellan was discharged as a Lieutenant, but is also called "Col." in the pamphlet of the Beauregard Monument Association, presumably for similar reasons (Appendix F).

³⁶ This is the caption to his picture in the pamphlet by the Southern Pacific Company called New Orleans, The Crescent City, 1718-1917 (New Orleans: Southern Pacific Co., 1917). He is also called "Vice President New Orleans Lighting Co." and "Treasurer People's Homestead Association." In William Patrick's Club Men of Louisiana in Caricature (East Aurora, NY: Roycrofters, 1917) ___ he is called "Secretary New Orleans Railway and Light Company."

³⁷ On all of this also see his obituary, "Col. DeGrange Dead."

³⁸ Many of these memberships seem to date from the early 1890s, though this may be a quirk of the documentary record.

³⁹ Local Lodge # 30, who were enjoined to turn out for his funeral; Daily Picayune 21 December 1926, p___ c___.

⁴⁰ The minutes for the NOPL for 12 January 1927, after his death, include a Memorial Resolution "that the Board, as a token of this respect and sincere friendship, express in these resolutions their sorrow at his loss" (NOPL Minute Book, 655, 657).

Battalion.⁴¹ He had clearly worked hard to develop his business and social connections to make of himself a success. Judging by the nature of his portrait by Louis Winterhalder (Appendix B), in which he is standing on a chair making a toast, he seems to have been popular at parties—this is probably an image of a Mardi Gras celebration.

Facts about the later lives of other family members are also known. Isabella, "Bella" in the letters, who was named after DeGrange's mother, died in 1878 at about age 9, perhaps of the massive yellow fever epidemic that summer.⁴² Others of their children lived on to become successful. Joseph Tormey became a locally well-known doctor, was Chairman of the first aid committee for the local Red Cross, and was active like his father in the Fire Department and the Washington Artillery.⁴³ Two of their later children, Helen and Marie Beatrice, attended Newcomb College for women, and were active artists of the well-documented Newcomb school, especially as embroiderers. This group of artists is especially well-known for its pottery, but also for painting, sculpture, and embroidery.⁴⁴

Sometime in the latter part of the century, the family invested in a prominent tomb in Metairie cemetery, which still stands (see Appendix H). Ellen died in 1910, at age 67. Grandpa DeGrange died 16 years later, on December 18th, 1926, and was buried next to his wife in the DeGrange tomb.

⁴¹ For the history of the Battalion after the war, at least through 1885, see William Owen, In Camp and Battle with the Washington Artillery of New Orleans (New Orleans, 1885; rpt. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1999), chapter 19. J.H. DeGrange (misspelled as "Degrauge") is listed here in this year as a Lieutenant on Col. John B. Richardson's Staff (429). The 1894 portrait of the officers labels him as a "Captain," and the 1895 portrait from the History of the Fire Department of New Orleans calls him "Col." (see Appendix B). The Battalion acquired the Hall on St. Charles Street in 1882 (see Appendix F); it existed until it was torn down in about 1950. Also see the obituary for John Richardson, Daily Picayune 31 January 1906, p__ c__.

⁴² She is not listed in the official records of the (over 4000) victims from that year, however, so this is a guess; see <http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/la/orleans/death_epid.htm>.

⁴³ On Joseph Tormey see Albert Emile Fossier, History of the Orleans Parish Medical Society 1878-1928 (New Orleans: privately printed, 1930); Washington Artillery Battalion of New Orleans, Washington Artillery Souvenir (New Orleans, ?1894). The Morning Tribune for 27 December 1830 p_ c2-3 notes Dr. Tormey's chairmanship of the local Red Cross first aid committee, and that he conducted first aid classes for the local Boy Scouts; the Daily Picayune 20 June 1931 p3 c4 notes that he did the same for local fire companies.

⁴⁴ On the Newcomb school see especially Suzanne Ormond, et al., Louisiana's Art Nouveau: The Crafts of the Newcomb Style (New York: Pelican, 1976), though this deserves to be updated.

Editorial Procedures

Most of the personal letters are handwritten on letter paper which is folded to make two leaves; each individual piece of paper, therefore, has four sides to write on. I refer to these as 1, 2, 3, and 4 when I note page turns. Those written by Ellen in the summer of 1869 have a "JHD" monogram impressed into the top left of page 1. Some letters (see 29 Jan. 1869, e.g.) use two of these pieces of paper. To be mailed, these sheets are folded over along the width and then the height to fit into the envelopes, which are therefore fairly small. These folds have become fairly stiff over time. The paper, however, seems quite durable.

My goal here is to make this accessible for interested family while maintaining a scholarly respect for the original text. These have not been very much "corrected."

- Everything is in strict date order.
- I cannot be sure that all of the letters are in their correct envelopes, but I record the addresses as well, and the date and time of the postmark when I can make it out.
- Many of the letters were written quickly, and so there are lots of spelling and grammar errors, even accounting for the differences in language between then and today. Spelling is literal, since this rarely interferes with sense (JHD, for instance, consistently spells "realy" with one l, and "business" as "buisness"). Some capitalization and punctuation has been silently modified, as minimally as possible, to make the sentences grammatical—or at least more grammatical. DeGrange tends to add a period at the end of every line, so this is often difficult, and the letters were often written quickly. Paragraphing has also been silently added, since the letters were mostly written in one long paragraph.
- [] surround all of my additions, including page turns.
- < > surround conjectures made for various reasons—because of damage to paper, words that have been written over, or words I can't decipher.
- ^ ^ surround words superscripted by the writer.