

THE GORGAS HOUSE BOUND SHEET MUSIC COLLECTION: A CASE STUDY OF
NINETEENTH-CENTURY MUSIC IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

by

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ABSTRACT

The University of Alabama's Gorgas Family Collection includes two bound volumes of sheet music containing a total of 123 compositions, scored primarily for piano or for voice with piano accompaniment, and published in the years 1832-40. The volumes are housed on the Tuscaloosa campus in the Museum of Natural History (H2009.0004.0746 and H2009.0004.0752). My findings from an examination of the volumes *in situ*, recorded in this DMA document and accompanying EXCEL spreadsheet, constitute the first scholarly study of the collection.

The scores were acquired by the family of John Gayle (Governor of Alabama, 1831-35). Signatures and other markings in the scores indicate that they were used primarily by his daughter Amelia, both in piano lessons at the Columbia Female Institute and for pleasure at home. Amelia brought the collection to the University of Alabama in 1878 when her husband, General Josiah Gorgas, was appointed president of the University. After failing health forced his resignation in 1879, he was named University librarian, a position Amelia assumed after his death in 1883.¹ She is credited with increasing the University's collection from 6,000 to 20,000 volumes; the main library bears her name and was the first University of Alabama academic building named for a woman.

The importance of the positions held by both her father and husband, as well as Amelia's role in the improvement and expansion of the University of Alabama library, have stimulated research and provided information about Amelia's family and about her married life. Details of

¹ In addition to her duties as librarian, she also served as hospital matron and postmistress.

her childhood and adolescence are rare, perhaps in part because her mother died when Amelia was only nine. This study of the collection's contents, physical condition, annotations in Amelia's hand, and her likely role in the organization of the works for binding offers insight into the role of music in her social life, in piano study at the Columbia Female Institute, and perhaps in her later contributions to the University library. The findings also add to our knowledge of the genres, publication and distribution, and cost of scores found in such collections acquired and used by the young women of wealthy Southern families in the Antebellum South.

DEDICATION

For my mother and two sisters.

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INTRODUCTION

The University of Alabama's Gorgas Family Collection includes two bound volumes of sheet music containing a total of 123 compositions, scored primarily for piano or for voice with piano accompaniment, and published in the years 1832-40. The volumes are housed on the Tuscaloosa campus in the Museum of Natural History (H2009.0004.0746 and H2009.0004.0752). Information gathered from examination of the volumes *in situ* and recorded in this DMA document and accompanying EXCEL spreadsheet, constitutes the first scholarly study of the collection.

The scores in the collection were acquired by the family of John Gayle (Governor of Alabama, 1831-35). Signatures and other markings indicate that they were used primarily by his daughter Amelia (1826-1913)² for piano lessons at the Columbia Female Institute and for pleasure at home. Amelia brought the collection to the University of Alabama in 1878 when her husband, General Josiah Gorgas, was appointed president of the University. The works in the collection are examples of the musical selections young women from affluent families studied and performed at school and for pleasure in the early nineteenth-century South.

This study documents Amelia's use of the collection and offers insight into her level of expertise on the piano, her care of the scores, her claim of ownership through the frequent use of her signature, and even the suggestion of a personal relationship—all possible indicators of the

² Use of the first name follows a precedent established by prior published works on the Gorgas family. Works include Mary Tabb Johnston, *Amelia Gayle Gorgas: A Biography* (University of Alabama Press, 2003); Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, *Love and Duty* (University of Alabama Press, 2005), among others.

interests, goals, and personality of this woman who made such important contributions to the University of Alabama and to the role of women in the South. The accompanying spreadsheet provides relevant information about each piece and seeks to maintain the orthography of the collection. The fields included are title, series, plate number, number of pages, publication, price, cover, illustration, instrumentation, date, publisher address, composer, variation numbers, duet, arranger, lyricist, intervallic range, theme, key, first line of poetry, signature, and missing pages.

Numerous publications chronicle the achievements of the Gayle and Gorgas families and Amelia's contributions to the University of Alabama are well-known and readily available³; also well-documented is information on the work of Amelia's son William C. Gorgas in the control of mosquitoes to prevent yellow fever and malaria in the Panama Canal Zone, Havana, and parts of Florida.⁴ Missing from the family chronical is information about Amelia's life prior to her marriage. Because her mother died when she was only nine, there are not even family letters such as a mother might have written to document Amelia's youth and adolescence. What were Amelia's interests prior to her marriage? What were her experiences as a young woman of wealth growing up in the nineteenth-century South? What education did she receive? What did she study? What was expected of her? What music did she like? When and where did she perform? As a teenager, did she have a beau? The choice of music, the markings, and the comments in the scores of 0746 and 0752 offer at least a glimpse into Amelia's youth, her education, her interests, and her musical preferences.

³ Examples include Mary Tabb Johnston, *Amelia Gayle Gorgas: A Biography* (University of Alabama Press, 2003); Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, *Love and Duty* (University of Alabama Press, 2005) and *The Journals of Josiah Gorgas* (University of Alabama Press, 1995).

⁴ Howard Atwood Kelly, *Walter Reed and Yellow Fever*. (New York, McClure & Phillips Co, 1906).

Through the use of tables and graphs, chapter one provides a detailed description of the collection, often comparing the two volumes. In addition to discussions of the contents and physical appearance of the collection, including binding and overall condition, this chapter examines sheet music acquisition in the early nineteenth century, particularly by the Gorgas family. Publication information, cost, and availability are explored, as well the topics referenced in the song lyrics of the piano-vocal sheet music. Chapter one concludes with an examination of what was expected of young affluent women who studied music in the nineteenth-century South.

Chapter two constructs a timeframe for Amelia's use of the collection through a discussion of the variations in her signature in both volumes. An investigation of additional proper names among the marginalia allows speculation on her early social life and proposes a would-be boy friend.

Amelia's study and performance of works in the collection while attending the Columbia Female Institute is the focus of chapter three. Of note are the progressive philosophy of education held by the leadership of the school and the exceptional scholastic opportunities there afforded Amelia by her affluent parents. Chapter four concludes the document with a summary of the findings in this study and of the contribution this knowledge can bring to the advancement of continued research.

CHAPTER ONE
COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

CONTENTS

Amelia's sheet music collection was bound in two volumes, likely before her marriage to Gorgas in 1853: the nameplate of 0752 reads "Amelia R. Gayle," and only versions of her maiden name appear in the scores. Together the volumes reflect Amelia's intention to organize her sheet music primarily by instrumentation. Volume 0746 begins with and contains primarily solo piano works, many with fingerings marked, as would have been the case when she used them at the Columbia Female Institute (see chapter three); it ends with a small group of twelve piano-vocal pieces. Very few fingerings appear in volume 0752, devoted primarily to piano-vocal selections with only a few piano solos at the end. This suggests that Amelia acquired this music later (though still before her marriage), and perhaps that she used it mainly at home for social functions or her own pleasure.

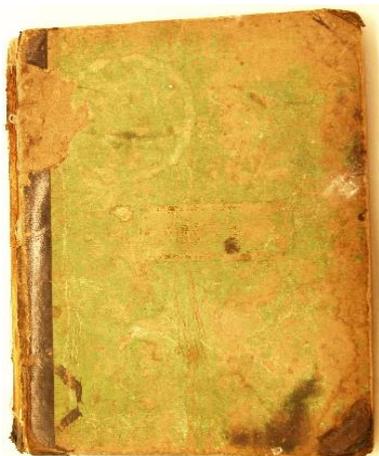


Fig. 1.1, Front cover of 0746.

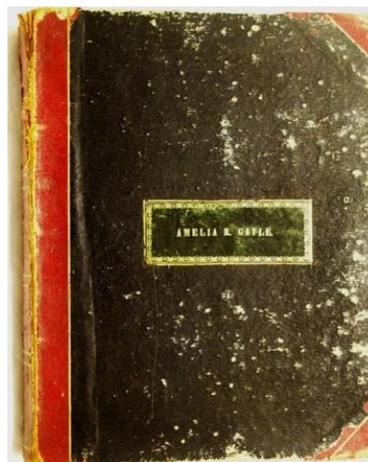


Fig. 1.2, Front cover of 0752.

BINDING

Sheet music binding provided protection, convenience, and preservation; professional and amateur musicians alike bound their sheet music. Some collections were bound with calfskin to add durability, but in periods of shortage, collections were bound with calfskin only on the spine and corners, as were the Gorgas volumes.⁵ A binding stamp on the pastedown of 0746 provides information on the location of the binding service: “George W. Wilson, book binder Nashville, TN”; 0752 bears no stamp. The binding of Amelia’s collection shows how valuable her music was to her and the importance of its preservation through the duration of her life and beyond.

PHYSICAL CONDITION

The table below summarizes information on the collection’s physical characteristics and content. Both volumes show wear from age and use, including foxing (an aging process in paper that causes brown spotting), tearing, staining (often liquid), and fraying. Generally, 0746 sustained more damage, but pages are missing from both volumes. In volume 0746, six pieces out of 44 are missing pages, as are two pieces out of 57 in 0752. Because 0746 has sustained more damage than 0752, it is likely the earlier volume, but as mentioned above, both volumes were used when Amelia was a young girl.

⁵ Dorothy T. Potter, *Food for Apollo* (Bethlehem, Lehigh University Press, 2011), 103.

Table 1. Collection characteristics and contents.

VOLUME	0746	0752
LENGTH WITH BINDING	13.2''	13.4''
WIDTH WITH BINDING	10.2''	10.1''
DEPTH WITH BINDING	1.7''	1.6''
COVER	MARBLING	MARBLING
BINDING	BROWN CALFSKIN	RED CALFSKIN
NAMEPLATE	NO	AMELIA R. GAYLE
DAMAGE	FOXING, PAPER DAMAGE, MISSING PAGES, STAINING	FOXING, PAPER DAMAGE, MISSING PAGES, STAINING
NUMBER OF PIECES	44	79
PIANO-SOLO	32	17
PIANO-VOCAL	12	62

PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Entries in my catalog show that of the 123 pieces in the collection (both volumes), 105 were published in the northeastern United States, in cities including New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Boston; only nine of the 123 lack a publisher's address. Major publishers in Amelia's collection include G. Willig, A Fiot Meignen & Co, and Torp & Unger. These publishers also sold sheet music in stores. G. Willig, a prominent publisher and seller in Philadelphia, opened the city's first music store. My catalog shows that Amelia's collection includes Willig's store stamp on 23 works, revealing that her family purchased music from his store. Willig's primary contribution to music in the American South was the publication of several music catalogs that supplied potential buyers (like Amelia's family) with information on newly published music. Prior to the availability of his catalogs, affluent families in the South were forced to rely on newspapers or the backs of sheet music. Willig made certain in his introductory paragraph that he intended to widen his audience:

G.W. is constantly supplied with new European and American music publications. Orders from any part of the United States, West Indies, or South America are attended to with care and dispatch.⁶

The Gayle family was affluent, as shown by their purchase of the scores in Amelia’s collection; prices ranged from \$0.37 to \$1.50, with many over \$1.00. According to an official inflation rate calculator, \$1.50 in 1840 is \$43.45 in the current economy.⁷ The cost of both volumes today would total, \$5344.35. These calculations show that not only did Amelia come from a wealthy family, but one that also valued music education.

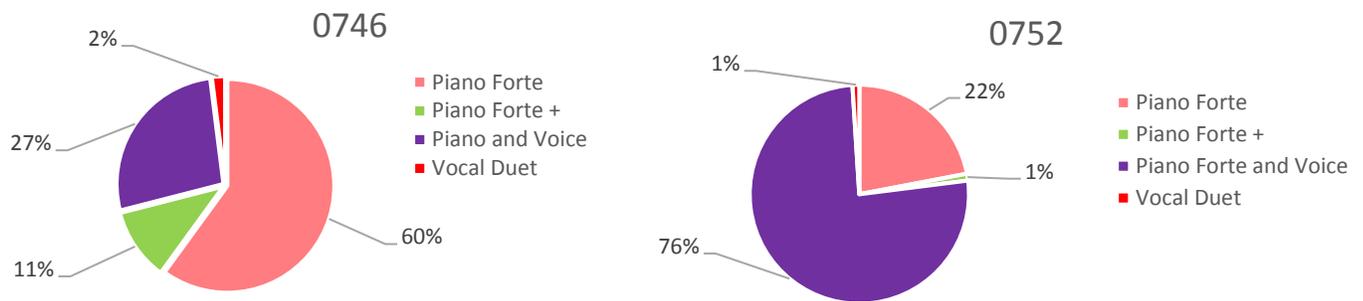


Fig. 1.3, Instrumentation graphs.

The graphs above show the instrumentation of Amelia’s pieces in her collection; primarily piano-solo and piano-vocal. Volume 0746 has more variety of instrumentation, which demonstrates it is likely the earlier volume because of more material with which to study at school (see chapter three). The pieces with additional instruments were likely used for chamber music at school (“Piano Forte +” in the graphs indicates that an additional instrument like harp

⁶ Stanley C. Pelkey, *Music and History: Bridging the Disciplines* (Mississippi: University of Memphis, 2005), 92.

⁷ The Official Data Foundation. “CPI Inflation Calculator.” Officialdata.org. <https://www.officialdata.org/1840-dollars-in-2018>. (accessed May 9, 2018).

was added to the score). Amelia’s volumes correspond to the studies of other surviving sheet music collections of her time period. Bailey explains that young women in the nineteenth century were playing mostly piano-solo and piano-vocal music, nothing more.⁸

Occasionally, sheet music volumes contain music by only a few composers. More typical, however, are collections that include many composers, which is the case with Amelia’s two volumes. (See the accompanying EXCEL spreadsheet for a list of composers). Her collection contains a variety of genres of music: dance, song, ballad, theme and variations, etc. Variations were often based on themes from an opera, thus introducing young women to operatic works they might not otherwise have known. Adaptions of popular songs and opera arias ranked high in Southern esteem. A table below shows the genres of the music in Amelia’s collection.

Table 2. Genres in the collection.

<i>Volume</i>	<i>0746</i>	<i>0752</i>
<i>Ballad</i>	4	11
<i>Theme and Variations</i>	19	0
<i>Song</i>	6	20
<i>Waltz</i>	9	8
<i>Air</i>	10	7
<i>Opera</i>	3	2

Missing from Amelia’s collection are pieces which today are considered “classical” in music literature: concerto, sonata, prelude, suite, etc. Major composers of such works are also missing: Bach, Mozart, Brahms, Haydn, etc. The culture of the Antebellum South embraced popular music and had little interest in highbrowism. Sometimes, a Chopin waltz might be included in a young woman’s collection, but never a Beethoven or Brahms sonata. Sonatas were considered far too masculine for young ladies, given the physical requirements needed to

⁸ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle* (Illinois: Southern University Press, 2010), 91-96.

perform them.⁹ Amelia's collection contains no works by any recognized "major" composer, though one piece in her collection is entitled, "Beethoven's Last Waltz," but the reference to Beethoven has nothing to do with the piece. In the early nineteenth century, many waltzes were attributed to Beethoven. He actually wrote only two waltzes, neither of which has any connection to this work. American composers thought that the marriage of "waltz" and "Beethoven" in a title would ensure a sale. The music industry was inundated with various Beethovenian titles. Reductions of symphonic works by major composers were common in the nineteenth century, but none exists in Amelia's collection.¹⁰

That women were not to perform works considered masculine is confirmed in an 1859 book of etiquette for young unmarried women: "Do not sing songs descriptive of masculine passion or sentiment." That young women played the piano was assumed, but their repertory was not technically challenging. Any woman who performed at a high level ran the risk of being accused of having both female and male characteristics.¹¹ Girls who were Amelia's age in the early 1800s were advised, "Avoid movement at the piano. Swinging the body to and fro, moving the head, rolling the eyes, raising the hands too much, are all bad tricks, and should be carefully abstained from."¹² A description of a music recital at a female school in Mississippi in 1842 explains, "The style of music preferred for women in that day was simple melody rather than the class that calls for showy execution—finger gymnastics—or the purely classical." Execution of that nature was deemed undesirable for a true lady—the amateur; it was reserved for professionals.¹³

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Michael Broyles, *Beethoven in America* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 293.

¹¹ Florence Harley, *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness* (Boston: Lee & Shepherd, 1859), 241.

¹² Ibid, 277.

¹³ Bailey, 115-17.

Thematic material of the piano-vocal works in Amelia’s collection is shown in the table below. Although there are themes of nature, reminiscence, and grief, love is the primary subject matter.

Table 3. Themes in the collection.

<i>Volume</i>	<i>0746</i>	<i>0752</i>
<i>Love</i>	8	18
<i>Reminiscence</i>	1	6
<i>Grief</i>	0	7
<i>Nature</i>	0	7

One of her love songs read:

Joy to the Bridegroom! A health to the Bride! Hark! ‘tis here footsteps!

She comes in her pride; A health to the Bridegroom and joy to the Bride!

On the blank pages that follow, the stain of a pressed flower is visible (see figure 1.4). Who gave Amelia this flower and why did she place it here? Was the piece “Joy to the Bridegroom” given to her by someone special or did she place the flower there because it was given by someone she hoped to marry?

The flower was placed on the back of the last page of music in the piece “Joy to the Bridegroom,” and the flower oils have bled onto the title page of the love song that follows, “A Tear Shall Tell Them All.” Amelia had the entire collection at her disposal to find a page to press her flower; yet she chose to put the flower between two piano-vocal love songs. The lyrics of “A Tear Shall Tell Them All” read,

At moonlight near the broken cross, young Ebert fondly,

Fondly swore, to love, but vow on heav’n high name,

So fervently he seem’d to call, that e’er my faltering voice replied,

A tear, a tear had told him all.

Were these piano-vocal pieces purchased together? Did a beau give her these pieces along with the flower? Amelia was given other sheet music by a “Lt. Nicholas,” (see chapter two). Might he also have given her the flower? The love songs in Amelia’s collection indicate that for her, as for most any young woman from an upper-class family in the early 1800s, marriage was in her future. Young women like Amelia would likely marry and love songs aided in making that expectation a reality.

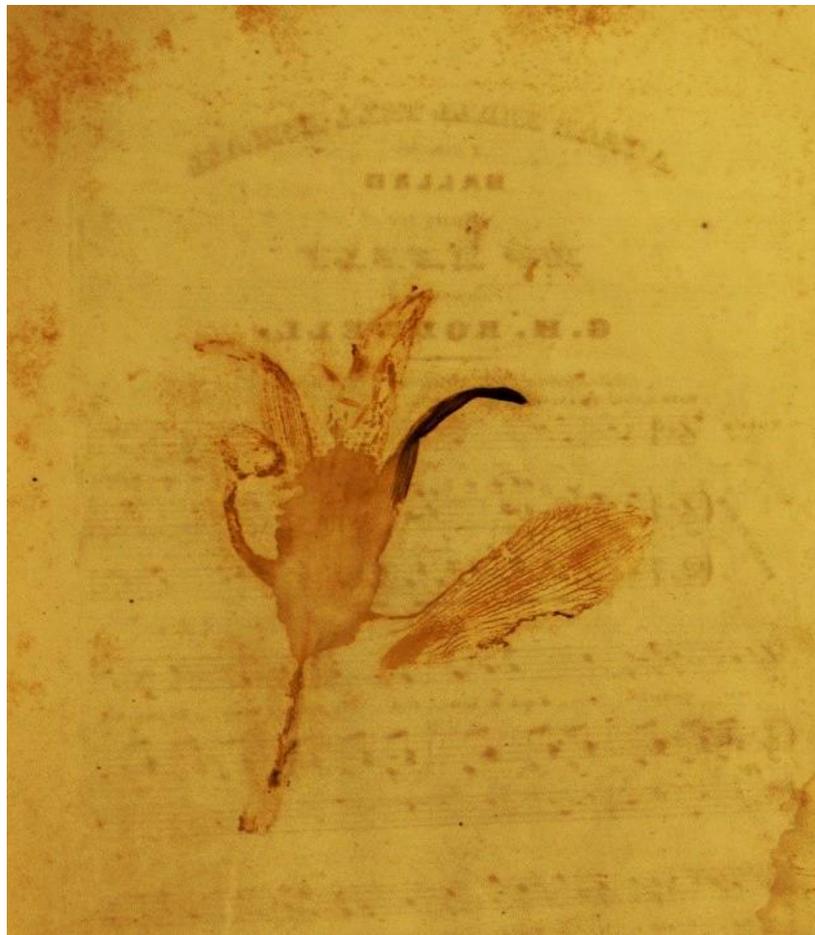


Fig. 1.4, Pressed flower.

CHAPTER TWO

COLLECTION PRACTICE

Amelia's signature appears frequently throughout both volumes of her collection, often on the top right-hand corner of the first page of music. Similar collections show that young women signed their names on the covers of their music, but Amelia never did; she protected her covers from any marking. Although covers made sheet music more expensive, they added protection, value, and visual appeal that increased their marketability—an important factor given their cost.

Although 0746 does not have a name plate, Amelia's ownership is authenticated by the reoccurrence of her signature on the music itself throughout both volumes and the absence of the signatures of others. As mentioned in chapter one, both volumes demonstrate ownership before she married because all signatures read "Gayle," not "Gorgas." Amelia's signatures indicate that she was quite possessive of her music. Throughout the collection, if the initial signature had become worn and barely visible, she added a second. Signature variations are Gayle, Amelia R. Gayle, A. Gayle, and Amelia Gayle.

Names other than Amelia's that appear in the margins provide evidence that she shared her musical experiences. Two names seem especially significant: Mrs. Boardman (appears once in the collection) and Lt. Nicholas (appears twice). Lt. Nicholas gave Amelia "The Louisville Gallopade," arranged for the pianoforte by W.C. Peters, and he also gave her "The Louisville Waltz," composed in 1835 for the pianoforte or harp. That the words "from Mrs. Boardman" are included and "to Amelia" and "from Lt. Nicholas" demonstrate the pieces were given to Amelia

by these two individuals. While my research has not identified Lt. Nicholas, Amelia's inclusion of his name, but no other male names, suggests friendship, and perhaps a close friendship; given the lack of information about Amelia's early peer relationships, these observations offer possibilities that might be proven with further research.

The signature of Mrs. Boardman (no first name has been found in my research) may be traced to Amelia's education at Columbia Female Seminary in Columbia, TN (see chapter three) where Mrs. Boardman taught piano and Amelia was her pupil. Mrs. Boardman placed her signature on "Spanish Cachucha" in volume 0746. The work is arranged as a piano duet, one of the few duets in both volumes. Did Amelia and Mrs. Boardman perform this piece together? Did Mrs. Boardman give the work to Amelia as a graduation present? Did she know Amelia wanted the piece, but didn't have it? Was Amelia a successful student that Mrs. Boardman grew to admire? A letter from Mary Jane Chester, who attended Columbia Female Seminary in 1841, complained about Mrs. Boardman's teaching strategies in a letter to her mother:

My dear Mama,
...This day...is examination, O [Oh!] I do try so hard to be prepared for it. This morning I was out of my bed two hours before day break...I think that I could do very well if it was not for my Composition. There is one consolidation no person will know who the Composition belongs to. I wish that Papa or someone of my relations would come up to it. If it was not for my French, I would have more time to study my other Studies. My Music Teacher has not concluded what piece I shall play at the Examination. I want to take under some other teacher next session for I do not think that Mrs. Boardman does me justice, as I told Papa.¹⁴

That Mary Jane wanted to change teachers suggests Amelia's seemingly positive experience with Mrs. Boardman may have been an exceptional one, or else Mary Jane didn't practice.

¹⁴ MSS 25 Robert J. Chester Family papers from the Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis. Used by Permission, 24 September 2018.

In addition to signatures as indications of Amelia’s use of the collection in her young adulthood, fingerings in both volumes show she “studied” these pieces. Fingerings may have been added by a teacher or Amelia. Generally, the finger numbers (“4,” etc.) appear to be written by the same hand. Fingerings do not necessarily authenticate performance of a piece, but suggest that Amelia, at the very least, attempted to learn the piece.



Fig. 2.1, Fingering graphs.

As shown in the graphs above, 0746 includes more fingerings than 0752, and these are generally in pieces with difficult passages that require advanced technique. Twenty-two pieces out of the 44 total in 0746 have fingerings and 2 of 67 in 0752. Throughout the collection, fingerings are absent from piano-vocal works as they lack technical challenge. Difficult passages without fingerings were probably not studied or performed. Fingerings are found in passages with frequent skips and accidentals, not often in scalar passages, etc. When included in passages of stepwise motion, fingerings were often placed on the first pitch of a succession of pitches and omitted from subsequent pitches. Within a repeated musical pattern, fingerings appeared only for the initial statement of the series. Most often, in contrast to modern fingering practice which

assigns “1” to the thumb, the collection uses the old English numbering system which indicates the thumb with “x” or “t,” (see fig. 2.2).



Fig. 2.2, “La Rose, Variations Brillantes.”

CHAPTER THREE

COLLECTION PERFORMANCE

In the nineteenth-century young women from affluent Southern Antebellum families attended schools (primarily away from home) during their teen years. Such women were expected to marry and to use their education to improve their families, specifically through the education of their children. Academies, or finishing schools, were established to provide the necessary skills.¹⁵ Amelia attended Columbia Female Institute (hereafter CFI) in Columbia, Tennessee, roughly 40 miles South of Nashville: she graduated on January 31, 1843.¹⁶ The institute was well established and provided a rigorous educational environment for Amelia, whose older sister attended and graduated prior to her enrollment.

Episcopalian Bishop James Otey founded numerous elite schools in Tennessee including CFI. Rev. Franklin Gillette Smith was appointed to administer the school, but if parents imagined that CFI would merely function merely as a finishing school for their daughters, culminating in the mastery of needlepoint, sewing and manners, they were wrong. Smith specified that “his” young ladies were certainly going to learn those things, and much more: geology, geometry, zoology, physics, chemistry, history, languages, algebra, theology, ecclesiastical polity, and “the usual elegant accomplishments.”¹⁷ That Smith prepared young women to become more than just an “ornament” on their husbands’ arms proved revolutionary

¹⁵ Mariam Forman-Brunell, *Girlhood in America* (ABC-CLIO: California, 2001), 137-8.

¹⁶ The Maury County Historical Society, “Columbia Female Institute,” accessed August 24, 2018, www.historicmaurycounty.com.

¹⁷ Waylen Edward, *Ecclesiastical Reminiscence of the United States* (Nabu Press, 2013), 540.

and not readily accepted. The Athenaeum, an elite girl's school in Columbia, Tennessee, also established by Smith and comparable to CFI, used curriculum only males had the opportunity to study.¹⁸ A memorial sketch of Smith explains his educational philosophy:

We are bound within no narrow limits. A subject wider in its range than the one which lies before us, cannot be suggested; and in seeking to give interest as well as usefulness to our work, we can be at no loss for topics. The world is all before us, where to choose. Religion, whether its own purity and loveliness, or as connected with letters and sanctifying while it elevates the aspirations and developments of genius; the fireside circle, the seat of the purest affections and the chief nursery of all that graces and adorns our world; the school redeemed from the tyranny of dogmatism and become the scene of courtesy, dignity and refinement, no less than of large-reaching thought, sound learning and skill in the management and mastery of the passions: in fine, all that is praiseworthy in the spirit of our wonderful age, its enterprise, its courage, its grasp after the highest attainments in art, science and invention: so various and illimitable are the fields from which our topics and illustrations are to be gathered. Whatever may contribute to control the imagination, to expand the mind and to elevate the aims of the young, to raise the genius and to improve the heart, we shall gladly welcome to our pages. Our aim is to diffuse sound and conservative views on all topics connected with the improvement of society, and more especially with the education of the future mothers of our land, upon whose wise and faithful execution of their high trust, our national prosperity more immediately depends than upon any other human instrumentality.¹⁹

Amelia's school was rigorously committed to the education of young women like her and to provide a sense of time and place for them.²⁰

This institute knows nothing of a royal road to learning. It has no faith in an art being taught in six lessons, or a language in twenty-four. Its aim is to inspire in all its members a love of study, and diligence in study, and to offer the best aids to all the zeal and industry it can excite; remembering that there is a point in rendering such assistance, beyond which the interposition of the teacher is a positive injury, rather than a benefit to the youthful mind. Learning is an acquisition; it is neither nature's endowment nor the teacher's gift; the pupil must put forth her own energies, or the bright jewel will never be hers."²¹

¹⁸ Gupton Linda, *Seasons in the South* (Indiana: Author House, 2013), 22.

¹⁹ Hathi Trust Digital Library, "Rev. Franklin Gillette Smith," accessed May 20, 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101057489070;view=1up;seq=3>.

²⁰ The Maury County Historical Society, "The Columbia Female Institute," accessed December 18, 2017, www.historicmaurycounty.com.

²¹ Johnson A.N, *Boston Musical Gazette*. (Boston: Johnson A.N., 1846), 78.

Table 4. Columbia Institute Floorplan.²²

Columbia Female Institute Floorplan				
<i>3rd Floor</i>	Dorm Rooms			
<i>2nd Floor</i>	Study Hall	Library	Rector's Study	Sick Room
<i>1st Floor</i>	Teacher/Tutor Accommodations	Boarder's Parlor	Music Department	Education Department
<i>Basement</i>	Dining Hall	Slave Quarters		

As described by an advertising pamphlet from 1837, the table above shows the floorplan of Amelia's school, which stood on top of a small hill outside of town and across the street from the house of James K. Polk, the 11th president of the United States. After the school burned in 1959, statues from the courtyard are the only surviving structures; they are now preserved at the James K. Polk, Museum.²³



Fig. 3.1, A garden statue from Columbia Female Institute.

²² "The Columbia Female Institute." www.historicmaurycounty.com, December 18, 2017.

²³ Johnson, A.N., 81

There were approximately 20 teachers at CFI, most of them female, and the school usually had approximately 175 to 200 students. Uniforms were a requirement and daily wear in winter months consisted of “alpaca or any worsted fabric, dark purple, solid color, with mantilla, or large cape, of the same materials, without trimmings.” In the spring, students wore “a blue gingham dress, solid color, without trimmings.”²⁴

In addition to the many academic subjects offered, classes were also provided in drawing, painting, and music. Music was a prominent component of the education of the girls, and group and private instruction were offered in harp, piano, singing, theory, organ, and guitar; however, music lessons were an added expense for parents. Competency on a musical instrument was an important element in assessing suitability for marriage and child-rearing, and was a factor in the cultural definition of a “lady.” In 1848, a description of the ideal environment surrounding a young lady included, “books, too, and music—a harp—a piano.” Common Southern art in the 1800s depicted parlors with musical instruments such as the piano, guitar, harp, and accordion. CFI owned one organ, three harps, ten pianos, and some guitars, and offered both elementary and advanced music classes daily; these included sight-reading, chord identification, and theory. The institute believed that that the study of music theory was indispensable for an accomplished performer.²⁵

The table below demonstrates the financial cost of both tuition and additional music opportunities that Amelia’s affluent family afforded her at CFI. An 1848 diary provides a description of the ideal environment of a young lady: “books, too, and music—a harp—a piano.”

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Common southern art in the 1800s depicted parlors with musical instruments such as the piano, guitar, harp, and accordion.²⁶

As shown in the table below, music lessons and instrument rental were costly. Despite this, music education remained a priority for parents, who delighted in calling on their daughters to play or sing for visitors. For a daughter to be known as an accomplished young woman was high praise. At Wesleyan Female College in North Carolina, 60 of the 72 students studied music, “which keeps the pianos going until 9:45pm.”²⁷

Table 5. Columbia Female Institute.²⁸

<i>5-Month Session</i>	Price in 1840	Price in 2018
<i>Harp Lessons</i>	\$30	\$868.93
<i>Singing Lessons</i>	\$25	\$724.11
<i>Group Lessons</i>	\$10	\$289.64
<i>Harp/Piano Rental</i>	\$5	\$144.82
<i>Organ/Guitar Rental</i>	\$2.50	\$72.41
<i>Tuition</i>	\$400	\$11,585.70

Young women often performed in schools, but the primary audience was in the home, in the parlor or private (sitting) areas. The most frequently mentioned place girls performed was in the parlor, where dancing was also common. Young women from privileged families did not sing in public, but were expected to do so in private. Since the parlor was not a stage, the girls were

²⁶ Bailey, 15.

²⁷ Farnham, 87.

²⁸ Official Data Foundation, “CPI Inflation Calculator,” accessed May 9, 2018, <http://www.officialdata.org/1840-dollars-in-2018>.

not considered performers, but were expected to perform whenever called upon; to refuse would have been considered impolite.²⁹



Fig. 3.2, Young women outside Columbia Female Institute.³⁰

²⁹ Bailey, 43-45.

³⁰ "Columbia Female Institute." www.historicmaurycounty.com, August 24, 2018.

CONCLUSION

During the process of this study, a young Amelia emerged from the silence of over 190 years with a sheet music collection in hand to demonstrate what her life was like as a young woman growing up in an affluent nineteenth-century Southern family. Long before Amelia walked the steps of the president's mansion at The University of Alabama she was in the process of building a foundation for the legacy she would eventually leave to the University, to education, and to women. Fortunate to have been born into a family of wealth, Amelia benefited from their willingness to spend the necessary funds to provide her an elite education, even at a time when education for women was seen as far less important than for men. Without her family's financial resources, her educational options would have been limited.

Although she suffered the loss of her mother at an early age, she overcame that tragedy and devoted her time and energies toward her educational pursuits. She matured into a kind, giving woman who poured her life into the education of others. In an 1894 issue of the *Corolla*, the University's yearbook, one student described the surroundings of the library as follows:

The library is open from 11 O'clock until 4 O'clock, during which time you can see a good many boys reading current periodicals...those desiring to read books usually draw them and carry them to their rooms, where they can keep them no longer than two weeks...I hastily glanced at the latest North American Review, also Puck, and went over and took my seat by Mrs. Gorgas, the Librarian, for a few moments chat...I would consider my college course well spent had I gained nothing else outside of my association with her.³¹

³¹ http://www.lib.ua.edu/libraries/gorgas/history-of-gorgas/#/Meet_Amelia.

Her sheet music collection has informed us of her life, but what had the collection taught her? It is through her sheet music collection that she learned discipline, the value of an education, and the advantages of a musical one. Evidently, Amelia lived at a time in history when not everyone appreciated the role music played in advancing women's education. An 1879 quote from *McGuffey's Sixth Eclectic Reader* reads:

It is better that a girl should return from school a first-rate *reader*, than a first-rate performer on the pianoforte. The accomplishment, in its perfection, would give more pleasure. The voice of song is not sweeter than the voice of eloquence; and there may be eloquent *readers*, as well as eloquent *speakers*.³²

It seems that Amelia, coming from the rigorous education she received, and given her attitude toward increasing the library collection at UA while still preserving her sheet music volumes so carefully, saw the value of both music and reading in education. Her studies at the female institute ushered her into an elite group of women, long before women in educational settings in the United States were commonplace.

Even though this study has shown aspects of Amelia's young life, it by no means suggests an end to the study of Amelia—her youth or adulthood—and other young affluent women in Southern history. A quote from a nineteenth-century magazine, *De Bow's New Orleans Monthly Review*, reads:

The old times have passed away when Betsy was content to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic at the parish school house in order that John might enjoy the advantage of a college education. Now-a-days, Betsy wants that kind of education too, and it is very probable she will make a far better use of it when once acquired than John ever will. In fact, if it can be accorded but to one, Betsy should have it.³³

Amelia did just that. From her adolescence, she had witnessed the power of an education, the opportunities it afforded those who were willing to accept the challenge of scholastic

³² McGuffey, William Holmes, *McGuffey's Sixth Eclectic Reader*, revised addition (New York: American Book Company, 1921, first copyright 1879, second 1896, third, 1907), 59.

³³ De Bow, James, *De Bow's New Orleans Monthly Review*, (Louisiana: J.D.B. De Bow, 1868), 855.

achievement. Her youth had shaped the future impact she had on students, not only at the University, but all with whom she associated. Today, nearly nineteen decades later, thousands of students at The University of Alabama pass through the doors of the Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library, continuing her legacy through the pursuit of their own education. “Meet me at Gorgas” is a phrase often spoken by students and faculty alike at the University to initiate study groups, meetings, or just coffee. Amelia would want it that way. She would be proud of “her library” because it not only offers an educational environment, but a sanctuary for learning and scholastic achievement—for all people—whatever race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, disability, or other protected status. The study of Amelia through her sheet music collection shows the power of one individual’s use of their education to empower an entire community and leave a celebrated legacy whose greatest impact may never be fully known. It remains the responsibility for those of us who follow Amelia to continue her legacy through our own educational experience, whether as a student or teacher, making certain these scholastic pursuits positively impact the people and communities around us.

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