

Guide to the Lyman Family Papers

MS 337



compiled by Manuscripts and Archives Staff

April 1984

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 337

CREATOR: Lyman family

TITLE: Lyman Family papers

DATES: 1803-1886

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 5 linear feet (12 boxes, 1 folio)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The principal figure in these papers is Joseph Bardwell Lyman, a lawyer and journalist. The papers include his correspondence, diaries, business papers, account books, court books, and articles written between 1858-1865. His student career is documented with papers written while at Yale College (1845-1850) and at the University of Louisiana Law School. As a distant relative of the Dickinson family of Amherst, Massachusetts, he corresponded with Emily Dickinson, her brother, Austin, and her sister, Lavinia. One letter from Austin Dickinson is in the papers. Emily Dickinson and Lavinia are represented by "snatches" from their letters copied out by Lyman. Also in the papers is a two-year series of engagement letters written to Laura E. Baker between 1856 and 1858 when they were married. Other letters describe army life during the Civil War, the Battle of Shiloh, 1862, and Lyman's interest in journalism and agriculture. Laura Baker Lyman is represented in the papers by a journal and miscellaneous papers.

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To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0337>.

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Joseph B. Lyman III, 1967.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Lyman Family Papers (MS 337). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

*JOSEPH BARDWELL LYMAN (Northampton, Mass.), son of Timothy Lyman and Experience (Bardwell), was born in Chester, Hampden Co., Mass., Oct. 6, 1829. For three years after graduation he was engaged in teaching, first in Cromwell, Conn., and afterward in Mississippi. In June, 1853, he went to Nashville, Tenn., where he remained till Jan. 1855, studying law. He then went to Louisiana, studied civil law in the New Orleans Law School, graduated with the valedictory in 1856, was admitted to the bar in April of that year, and continued to reside in New Orleans practicing law till the breaking out of the war. He was in the Confederate army eighteen months; being chiefly engaged in commissary and hospital service. In Sept. 1863, he came north and joined his family in Boston, they having gone thither by sea a year previous. For a year he resided at Easthampton, Mass., trying to earn an honest living by the work of his hands, painting houses, and working in the corn and tobacco fields, his southern sympathies rendering it impossible, however, for him to secure regular employment. In Feb. 1864, he removed to New York City and engaged in journalism with immediate and gratifying success. From 1867 to 1869 he was agricultural editor of the "N. Y. World," and for several months managing editor of "Hearth and Home," and about Jan. 1869, was called to edit the agricultural department of the "N. Y. Tribune," where he continued till his death from small pox, Jan. 28, 1872. During these years he wrote "Women of the War," "Resources of the Pacific States," and, assisted by his wife, "The Philosophy of Housekeeping."

His classmates will surely be glad to see in full, and, will read with a sad interest Lyman's cheerful letter, written from the "Tribune" office, July 16, 1870, to those of us who met four days later for our twentieth anniversary:

" My dear Classmates:- I will be with you in hope and in spirit on the 20th, and I had planned for months to stand with you all and touch your hands after two decades. But a party of journalists have requested me to go with them across the continent, and while you are sitting there on the grass I will be whirling up the valley of the North Platte, or loitering on the margin of Salt Lake. The record thus written for you is far dimmer than the vital report of man to man, as eyes give their swift verdicts, and we note in gait and port, in wrinkle or in beard the stamp of twenty years.

"Three summers after we were graduated I read Black-stone, and Kent, and Greenleaf, and five years after those diplomas I received a certificate from the Supreme Court of Louisiana of my fitness to plead before it. From '56 to '61 I was in practice in the courts of that State and liked it. I proposed a summer home in the picturesque mountains near Chattanooga, and tasks and enterprises there-

"Where the rose, in crimson glory

Blossoms all the winter time."

But,

"The best laid plans of mice and men

Gang aft a'glee."

"The war broke over me as a sea; it quenched hopes, thwarted plans, destroyed securities, and made engagements nugatory. My land became a useless spread of earth; my fees went where the woodbine twineth. In Feb. 1865, I set foot in Broadway. That day on the bulletin board of this paper stood the words, "Conference at Fortress Monroe, without results." In a day or two there appeared a leader in the "Times" on the situation. It was from my pen. Thus introduced, I entered on newspaper work, and have been in it ever since. I like it so well that the salary of Chief Justice Chase would not draw me back to the hazards and harassments of the courts. In 1858 I married. No step of life has been so important, and none with me has been so fortunate. It opened a gateway into a merry land where the bells are ringing and the birds are singing all the day long. Of little Lymans there are five; three are boys. My home is on a farm near Trenton, my work here, where the feet of those I write for echo round me evermore.

"My twenty years of knock and scuffle have pounded three or four ideas into me. Perhaps you have been hammered into the same convictions; it so, you will agree with me; 1st. That in American society, all a brave spirit asks of fortune, is to let ability have opportunity. 2d. That in winning success no counsel is to be held with flesh and blood: He wins who can do two days' work in one, and who is trying to see how much, not how little work he can do. 3d. Yet I have learned to condemn the gilded, phantoms for which I see men racing. I am never sick, I am wholly content with the opportunity before me, and my home after labors is as blessed as I hope Heaven may be after death."

Many notices of his death appeared in the public prints, of which we quote the following: "We mourn in him a most amiable, able and faithful associate, and all the friends of enlightened and progressive agriculture will find his loss an irreparable one. He was a devoted Christian, always foremost in all good works in his neighborhood, and his unobtrusive charity was limited only by his means. It will be well for us all, if when the summons of death comes, it finds us with a record made up of so little harm and so much good done, as was that of this modest and faithful workingman."

He was married at Nashville, Tenn., July 14, 1858, to Miss Laura E. Baker, daughter of Rev. Charles Baker, of Somerville, Mass., and left six children surviving him: (1) Alexander S., born April 8, 1860; (2) Charles W., born Nov. 5, 1861; (3) Laura E., born Dec. 24, 1866; (4) Carrie F., born Aug. 28, 1868; (5) Joseph B. Jr., born Jan. 4, 1870; (6) Clarence A., born April 12, 1871. Mrs. Lyman is living with her children at Richmond Hill, L. I.

Biographical Record of the Class of 1850 of Yale College, pp. 47-50.

For a register outlining the genealogical relations of the Lyman family, please consult the [Family Register](#).

Scope and Contents

The Lyman Family Papers consist of correspondence, diaries, writings, account books, law practice records, memorabilia, and miscellaneous papers of Joseph B. Lyman plus correspondence and miscellaneous papers of other members of the Timothy and Experience (Bardwell) Lyman family.

The correspondence, consisting mainly of exchanges between members of the family, contains much religious and philosophical material and many comments about schooling and careers in various parts of the United States. The vast majority of letters are by Joseph B. Lyman, spanning from the mid-1840s

until his death in 1872 and covering these aspects, among others, of his career and personal life: his schooling at Williston Seminary and Yale College; his friendship with Emily Dickinson, her brother Austin, and her sister Lavinia;¹ his teaching in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Indiana; his law training and practice in New Orleans; his service in the Civil War (including an account of the Battle of Shiloh); and his postwar career in agricultural journalism. Most of the remaining letters were written between the mid-1830s and the mid-1850s by other members of the family—principally Joseph’s brothers, Washington, Timothy, and Edward; his sister, Louisa (Lyman) Reed, and her children; and Laura Baker, who became his wife. Washington Lyman’s letters are from Kentucky, Tennessee, and other places in the South; Edward’s, from Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin; Timothy’s, from Andover Theological Seminary, Princeton, and Fort Madison, Iowa; the Reeds’, from Massachusetts and Iowa. Laura Baker’s letters—to her parents in Ipswich, Mass., and later to Joseph B. Lyman—describe her experiences as a teacher in Natchez and Nashville in the 1850s. The non-family correspondence consists mainly of letters to Joseph B. Lyman from friends and school and business associates.

¹Excerpts were edited by Richard S. Sewall and published in the *Massachusetts Review* in 1965.

The Lyman Family papers were placed on deposit by Joseph Lyman, Jr., in 1961, and donated to the Library in 1967. Three unidentified daguerrotypes have been transferred to the Historical Picture Collection.

Collection Contents

Inventory, 1803-1886

| Correspondence | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| b. 1, f. 1-21 | 1829-1855 | 1829-1855 |
| b. 2 | 1856-1858 May | 1856-1858 May |
| b. 3 | 1858 June-1865 February | 1858 June-1865 February |
| b. 3, f. 47 | 1862 Apr-Jun | |
| b. 3, f. 48 | 1862 Jul-Dec | |
| b. 4 | 1865 March-1869 | 1865 March-1869 |
| b. 5 | 1870-1872, 1880, 1886, undated | 1870-1872, 1880, 1886, undated |
| Personal papers of Joseph B. Lyman (1829-1872; Y. 1850) | | |
| Bound volumes | | |
| b. 6 | Diaries | 1854-1871 |
| b. 6 | Pocket notebooks | 1843-1846, 1854-1870 |
| b. 6 | Pocket notebooks | undated |
| Account books | | |
| b. 7 | 1855-1860 | 1855-1860 |
| b. 7 | 1858-1863 | 1858-1863 |
| b. 7 | 1860 English | 1860 |
| b. 7 | 1869 English | 1869 |
| b. 7 | 1870 English | 1870 |
| Court books | | |
| b. 7 | ca. 1853 | Circa 1853 |
| b. 7 | 1856-1862 | 1856-1862 |
| b. 7 | 1858 | 1858 |
| Journals | | |

Personal papers of Joseph B. Lyman (1829-1872; Y. 1850) > Bound volumes > Journals (continued)

| | | |
|--------------|---|-----------|
| b. 7 | 1857 English | 1857 |
| b. 7 | 1862 English | 1862 |
| b. 7, f. 106 | Bound volumes JBL: journals (addressed to Laura) | 1862 |
| Writings | | |
| b. 8 | "Historia Erotica" and measurement charts English | 1858 |
| b. 8 | "Locust Hill Field Book" English | 1858 |
| b. 8 | Copy book of poems and essays | 1859-1860 |
| b. 8 | "Botes on Readings in Kent, Part V" English | 1861 |
| b. 8 | "The African Question" English | 1863 |
| b. 8 | "Observations on Happiness, Health, Temperament, Knowldege, and Sundry other Topics" English | 1863 |
| b. 8 | "The Capture of New Orleans and Butler's Administration..." English | [1863?] |
| b. 8 | "Notebook and Journal for Records in Self Culture" English | 1863 |
| b. 8 | "Outlines of a Plan for the Government of the Emancipated Africans of the U.S." English | 1863 |
| b. 8 | "The Southern Situation and Prospects" English | [1863?] |
| b. 8 | "Cotton Planting and Management of Negroes" English | 1864 |
| b. 8 | "The Garden Calender" English | 1864 |
| b. 8 | "Scripture Readings" English | 1864 |
| b. 8 | "Faces of Washington and Caezar..." English | 1865 |
| b. 8 | Leaders for the <i>New York Daily Times</i> | 1865 |
| b. 8 | Notes on Rabbi Beane and Andy Johnson | 1865 |
| b. 8 | "The Revolution in Rebel Politics" English | [1865] |

Personal papers of Joseph B. Lyman (1829-1872; Y. 1850) > Writings (continued)

| | | |
|------|---|-----------------------|
| b. 8 | "War Literature" English | 1865 |
| b. 8 | "What becomes of Old Iron, Outline of Thoughts" English | 1865 |
| b. 8 | "Sketches of Rebel Leaders, No. 1, Jeff Davis" English | [1866-1867?] |
| b. 8 | "The Boys' Homer..." English | 1867 |
| b. 8 | "A Grand Industrial School in Dream-Land" English | 1867 |
| b. 8 | "Major General Philip Kearny" English | [1867?] |
| b. 8 | "A Treatise on Manures" English | [1867?] |
| b. 8 | "An Essay on the Origin, Nature and Value of the Green Sand Marl" in Marl English | |
| b. 8 | "The Campaigns of the Great American War" English | undated |
| b. 8 | "Cheese as Food" English | undated |
| b. 8 | "Handbook of American Oratory" English | undated |
| b. 8 | "George S. Hillard" English | undated |
| b. 8 | [Chapters I, II, of History of the Civil War?] English | undated |
| b. 8 | "To Kalon" English | undated |
| b. 8 | "The Ocean Treasure" English | undated |
| b. 8 | "Wendell Phillips" English | undated |
| b. 8 | "Young Housekeepers Catechism..." English | undated |
| b. 8 | Notes on agricultural topics | undated |
| b. 9 | Notes, fragments, and miscellaneous | 1860-1869, undated |

School papers

Personal papers of Joseph B. Lyman (1829-1872; Y. 1850) > School papers (continued)

| | | |
|-------|--|---|
| b. 9 | Yale College student writings | 1845-1851 |
| b. 9 | University of Louisiana Law School papers | 1853-1856 |
| b. 9 | Law practice papers | 1856-1863, undated |
| b. 10 | Law practice papers | 1856-1863, undated |
| b. 10 | Notes on Dr. Palmer's sermons (of New Orleans) | 1860-1861 |
| | Miscellaneous papers | |
| b. 10 | Descriptions, plans and sketches for houses | 1861, undated |
| b. 10 | "Minutes of meeting held on eve of Company D's departure for war in Tennessee..." English | 1862 |
| b. 10 | Phrenologist's report on JBL, including portion marked "Sexually" | 1865 |
| b. 11 | Legal and financial papers | 1803-1838, 1844-1850, 1858-1863, 1868-1872, undated |
| | Miscellaneous papers | |
| b. 11 | Charles W. Lyman: composition book | 1872-1873 |
| | Laura (Baker) Lyman | |
| b. 11 | Journal and scrapbook | 1851-1868 |
| b. 11 | Papers | 1857, 1864, undated |
| b. 11 | Alphabet book | undated |
| | Timothy Lyman (1782-1837) | |
| b. 11 | Copy of will | 1806 |
| b. 11 | Notes on property | undated |
| b. 11 | Gravestone markings | undated |
| b. 11 | Wm. McMaster: poems in response to the deaths of Timothy Lyman and Miss Wealthy Lyman | 1838, 1841 |
| b. 11 | Genealogical notes | undated |
| b. 11 | Inscription on monument honoring dead at Alamo | undated |
| b. 11 | Poem on a dead cat | undated |
| b. 11 | Partial description of gold discovery in 1848 | undated |

Miscellaneous papers (continued)

| | | |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| b. 11 | Maps (manuscript) | undated |
| b. 11 | Newspaper clippings | |
| b. 11 | Remedies for assorted ailments | 1870 |
| b. 11 | Wrappers and envelopes | undated |
| b. 12 | <i>Ancestral Tablets</i> (with no entries) English | 1871 |
| b. 12 | <i>Mitchell's School Atlas</i> English | undated |
| b. 12 | Memorabilia | 1866-1871, undated |
| Memorabilia (oversize) | | |
| b. 13 | Broken spoon | 1808 |
| b. 13 | JBL: University of Louisiana Law School diploma | 1856 |
| b. 13 | Laura (Baker) Lyman: slippers | 1858 |
| b. 13 | JBL: neckties | [1871] |
| b. 13 | JBL: locks of hair | [1872] |
| b. 13 | Chart of Biblical data | undated |
| b. 13 | Confederate rag cloth | undated |
| b. 13 | Cotton from one of "10,000 bales burnt by Rebels at the capture of New Orleans" | undated |
| b. 13 | Map, hand painted, of unidentified area | undated |
| b. 13 | "Tabular View of the Law of Prescription . . ." English | undated |
| b. 13 | Tweezers | undated |
| b. 13 | Shoes made by slave, with explanatory note | 1863 |

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Agriculture
Clergy
Courtship
Education
Families
Husband and wife
Journalism
Journalists
Law
Lawyers
Literature -- History and criticism
Phrenology
Shiloh, Battle of, Tenn., 1862

Geographic Names

Southern States
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

Genres / Formats

Account books
Diaries

Names

Dickinson, Emily, 1830-1886
Dickinson, Lavinia Norcross, 1833-1899
Dickinson, William Austin, 1829-1895
Lyman, Joseph B. (Joseph Bardwell), 1829-1872
Lyman, Laura E. (Laura Elizabeth), 1831-1912

Families

Lyman family

Corporate Body

Yale University -- Students