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Guide to the Linus Yale Papers

MS 872

compiled by Janet Elaine Gertz

January 1982

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 872

CREATOR: Yale, Linus, 1821-1868

TITLE: Linus Yale papers

DATES: 1821-1873

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.25 linear feet (8 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Family and business correspondence and financial records largely relating to the invention of the Yale Lock and Linus Yale's attempts to establish a sucessful business in Newport, New York, and Philadelphia. The papers of the Yale Lock company continue after the death of Linus Yale and contain documents on its financial reorganization and on suits against infringements of Yale Patents (1868-1870).Yale's intellectual and social life is revealed in his correspondence with Henry and Walter Brown, William Morris Davis, A. Heymann, William Manley and John Hoskin. Many of the letters also concern mechanics, and ideas for new inventions, with drawings. The family correspondence includes numerous letters between Linus Yale and his wife, Catherine, as well as letters between her and her sisters. Of particular interest are the letters from her sister Nancy Gore in Wisconsin, which contrast with the letters from another sister, Elizabeth Carter, in New York, and a friend, Fanny Marley, preparing a career as an artist in Boston.

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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

Purchased by Yale University, 1965.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Linus Yale Papers (MS 872). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

Linus Yale: manufactured first lock at Shelburne Falls, Mass., 1851, known as "Yale Infallible Bank Lock"; improved this lock, 1851-1860; received patent for "Cylinder Lock", 1861; with Henry R. Towne established the Yale Lock Manufacturing Company, 1868, with a plant in Stamford, Connecticut.

Scope and Contents

40" (8 boxes) Dates: 1821, 1844-1873

The Linus Yale Papers provide insight into the life of Linus Yale, inventor of the Yale lock, and of his wife, Catherine (Brooks) Yale, and document part of the history of the Yale Lock Company. The bulk of the collection consists of correspondence from business associates, friends and family, but there are also legal and financial papers relating to the Yale Lock Company. Almost the only outgoing correspondence consists of letters exchanged by Linus and Catherine.

Although the material dates from the 1840s to the 1870s, most of Linus Yale's correspondence and the family papers date from the 1850s. The collection focuses on the period following Yale's early inventions during which he was working to establish the reputation of his locks and to develop a financially successful business in Newport (N.Y.) and Philadelphia. His correspondence traces his attempts to acquire and enforce patents, his controversies with rival manufacturers, and his continual improvements of his locks. The correspondence of his son John Brooks Yale, treasurer from 1867 of the Yale Lock Company, carries on many of these themes.

Yale's correspondence also reveals his intellectual and social life, and together with letters to and from his wife and from her family and friends presents a picture of a closely-knit circle much interested in the artistic, literary, and intellectual currents of their day.

The collection is divided into three series: CORRESPONDENCE, YALE LOCK COMPANY PAPERS, and FAMILY PAPERS.

The correspondence reveals Yale's strong interests in art and invention, as well as his involvement with his business. The development of the Yale lock and the Yale Lock Company is shown in the correspondence with various corporate entities, with Yale's various agents (John Buckingham, E.W. Partridge, Charles Oscar Yale), and with his friend and associate John Hoskin. Topics discussed include continuing improvements of the Yale lock (see also the correspondence with the United States Patent Office), competition with rival manufacturers, litigation over infringements of Yale's patents, and controversy over the general effectiveness of various types of locks.

Yale's artistic, intellectual and social life comes to light in the correspondence of Henry and Walter Brown, A. Heymann, William Manley, and particularly that of his two most frequent correspondents, John Hoskin and William Morris Davis. The letters from Davis encompass philosophy, religion, economics and politics (for instance, the connection of slavery to Eli Whitney's inventions, 1855 Jan 25), mechanics and various branches of science, and ideas for new inventions. The letters of both Davis and Hoskin include fine drawings of machinery, safes, and locks. It is unfortunate that many of these letters are badly stained and torn.

Series II is entitled YALE LOCK COMPANY PAPERS. Since Linus Yale's business went through several reorganizations at different periods, subsumed under this title are the antecedent companies of Yale and Phillie (ca. 1853), Yale and Greenleaf (ca. 1861-1863), Yale and Winn (ca. 1866-1869), and finally Yale Lock Company (1869-1873). The series is divided into two sections, *Correspondence and Legal, Financial, and Other Papers*.

Correspondence contains incoming letters addressed not only to the company, but also to John B. Yale in his capacity as treasurer from 1867 to 1873. While some of the correspondence concerns routine orders for locks, questions on prices, and complaints, there are also substantive letters on financial matters, on the reorganiation of the company as the Yale Lock Company (1869), and on suits against infringements of Yale patents (1869-1870). The letters are arranged chronologically.

The second section comprises legal papers, financial papers, and printed matter. Among the legal papers are a number of patents held by inventors other than Yale, several accompanied by detailed drawings of locks. The financial papers include statements, invoices, bills, a bank book (1869-1870), and related material. Newspaper clippings and several pamphlets on ores and metal processes conclude the series.

Series III, FAMILY PAPERS, is composed of correspondence (1844-1858), a few pages of a journal kept by Catherine Yale's sister, Nancy (Brooks) Gore (1844), a letter from Zebedee Simonds whose relation to the Yale family is unknown (1821), printed matter belonging to John B. Yale, and a miscellany of poems and calling cards.

The correspondence, arranged chronologically, is largely that of Catherine Yale. There are many highly affectionate letters exchanged by Linus and Catherine, written during his frequent business trips, which deal both with business and with family matters. Aside from a few letters (1857) from Linus Yale, Sr., and from Linus Yale, Jr.'s brother-in-law Ira Cady, the remainder of the correspondence comes from Catherine's family and friends. Frequent correspondents are her sisters Nancy Gore and Elizabeth (Brooks) Carter, her brother-in-law Charles Carter, and Fanny Marley. Much of the correspondence deals with the social, cultural, and intellectual life of New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston in the 1850s, and contrasts sharply with letters from Nancy Gore describing life in Union, Wisconsin, in the same period.

These often lengthy and emotional letters reveal a group of women who were active in many spheres of life, and whose interests ranged from family concerns and the position of women to the arts and literature. Catherine Yale was the author of poems, essays, and several volumes of short stories; her friend Fanny Marley was preparing for a career as an artist in Boston. Immersed in day-to-day family life and regularly menaced by illness and death, they often turned to homeopathic medicine for cures and to religion and spiritualism for comfort.

The Linus Yale Papers were purchased by Yale University in 1965.

Arrangement

Arranged in three series: I. Correspondence. II. Yale Lock Company Papers. III. Family Papers.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1844-1868

10″ (2 boxes)

b. 1, f. 1	Ames Manufacturing Company
b. 1, f. 1	Bank of Hartford County
b. 1, f. 1	Briggs' Iron Fence, Balconies, Railing, Etc.
b. 1, f. 2	Brown, Henry K.
b. 1, f. 3	Brown, Walter
b. 1, f. 3	Browne, Alexander Porter
b. 1, f. 4	Buckingham, John R.
b. 1, f. 5	Cramer, J.
b. 1, f. 5	Cruikshank, A.
b. 1, f. 6	Davidson Safe Manufacturer (Fire King Safe Works)
b. 1, f. 7-9	Davis, William Morris
b. 1, f. 10	Durand, [Stillwell?]
b. 1, f. 10	Fuller, G.
b. 1, f. 10	Gibbons, James
b. 1, f. 10	Hart, William
b. 1, f. 10	Henderson, Monroe
b. 1, f. 11	Heymann, A.
b. 1, f. 12	Holdredge and Gilbert
b. 1, f. 13-17	Hoskin, John
b. 2, f. 18	Lippincott and Barr
b. 2, f. 19	McMurray and Pawley St. Louis Iron Railing Manufactory
b. 2, f. 19	McMurray, Clark, and Company
b. 2, f. 20	Manley, William
b. 2, f. 20	Marvin, A. S.
b. 2, f. 20	Maynard, Edward
b. 2, f. 20	Mettler, D. R.
b. 2, f. 21	Palmer and Company

b. 2, f. 22	Parsons, F.
b. 2, f. 23	Partridge, E. W.
b. 2, f. 24	Peirce, Isaac B.
b. 2, f. 25	Porter, James H.
b. 2, f. 26	Powers, Daniel
b. 2, f. 26	Roff and Stearns
b. 2, f. 27	Sellers (William) and Company
b. 2, f. 27	Seymour, Harvey
b. 2, f. 27	Stillman, _____
b. 2, f. 28-29	United States Patent Office
b. 2, f. 30	Warriner, Chauncey
b. 2, f. 30	Weld, Theodore D.
b. 2, f. 30	Wendell, H.
b. 2, f. 31-33	Yale, Charles Oscar (O.C.)
b. 2, f. 34	Unidentified

Series II: Yale Lock Company papers, 1844-1873

20″ (4 boxes)

	Correspondence	
b. 3, f. 35-48	1848-1869 May	1848-1869 May
b. 4, f. 49-61	1869 June-1870	1869 June-1870
b. 5, f. 62-69	1871-1873, undated	1871-1873, undated
	Legal, Financial, and Other Papers	
b. 5, f. 70-72	Legal papers	1844-1871, undated
b. 6, f. 73-81	Financial papers	1853-1870, undated
b. 6, f. 82	Bank book	1869-1870
b. 6, f. 83	Printed matter	1853, 1868, undated

Series III: Family Papers, 1821, 1844-1872

10″ (2 boxes)

	Correspondence	
b. 7, f. 84-96	1844-1855 June	1844-1855 June
b. 8, f. 97-106	1855 July–1858, n. d.	1855 July–1858, n. d.
b. 8, f. 107	[Brooks, Nancy R.?: journal English	1844 November 23- 1845 February 28
b. 8, f. 108	Simonds, Zebedee: ALS to his parents	1821 November 23
b. 8, f. 109	Yale, John B.: Union League Club annual reports	1870, 1872
b. 8, f. 110	Miscellaneous	undated

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

Brothers and sisters
Business
Businessmen
Industries -- United States
Locks and keys
Locksmiths
Small business -- United States
Women artists

Geographic Names

Boston (Mass.) -- Social life and customs
New Haven (Conn.)
New York (N.Y.) -- Social life and customs
Wisconsin -- Social life and customs

Occupations

Inventors

Names

Davis, William Morris, 1850-1934
Hoskin, John
Marley, Fanny
Yale, Catharine Brooks, 1818-1900
Yale, Linus, 1821-1868

Corporate Body

Yale & Towne Manufacturing Company