

# Guide to the William Henry Anderson Correspondence Regarding the Crocodile Club

MS 2018



compiled by Christy Tomecek

March 2015

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
(203) 432-7441  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 2018

**CREATOR:** Anderson, William Henry, 1836-1902

**TITLE:** William Henry Anderson correspondence regarding the Crocodile Club

**DATES:** 1856-1858

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 0.02 linear feet (1 box)

**LANGUAGE:** The material is in English.

**SUMMARY:** This collection comprises eleven letters from 1856 to 1858 sent by Yale College student William Henry Anderson to his parents, Francis D. and Jane Anderson. Much of the correspondence is concerned with the events of February 9, 1858, when Anderson and fellow members of the Yale student organization, the Crocodile Club, got into an argument with a group of New Haven firemen outside their firehouse. The argument escalated and an unknown person among the Yale students fired two bullets. One of them struck fireman William Miles and he died from the injury the next day. Anderson and the other members of the Crocodile Club were brought to trial, where all of them invoked their Fifth Amendment right. Because the prosecution was unable to learn who actually committed the murder, none of the students were charged. However, Yale faculty asked the Crocodile Club to disband and the students agreed.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/>

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## Requesting Instructions

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/>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

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

b.      box  
f.      folder

## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of David Alan Richards, 2015.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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### Conditions Governing Use

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### Preferred Citation

William Henry Anderson Papers (MS 2018). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

William Henry Anderson was born on January 12, 1836 in Londonderry, New Hampshire. He was part of Yale College's Class of 1859. While a student, he helped start and became the steward of the Yale student organization called the Crocodile Club in 1858. However, the club was short lived due to an altercation with a group of New Haven, Connecticut firemen that resulted in the death of fireman William Miles. The members of the Crocodile Club were put on trial, but none of them were convicted. Anderson continued as a student of Yale after the club disbanded. After graduation in 1859, he became a private teacher for two families. In 1860, he moved to Lowell, Massachusetts and began working in the law office of Morse and Stevens. Anderson was admitted to the bar in 1862 and started a partnership called Stevens and Anderson with lawyer George Stevens. The partnership lasted until 1875 and then Anderson practiced alone for the rest of his career. Besides practicing law, Anderson served on the school committee of Lowell, Massachusetts, served on the Common Council in 1868 and 1869, served as director of the Merchant's National Bank of Lowell from 1870 until his death, and served on the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1871 and 1872. Anderson married on October 1, 1868 and had one daughter. He died on April 14, 1902 in Lowell, Massachusetts.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection comprises eleven letters from 1856 to 1858 sent by Yale College student William Henry Anderson to his parents, Francis D. and Jane Anderson. Much of the correspondence is concerned with the events of February 9, 1858, when Anderson and fellow members of the Yale student organization, the Crocodile Club, got into an argument with a group of New Haven firemen outside their firehouse. The argument escalated and an unknown person among the Yale students fired two bullets. One of them struck fireman William Miles and he died from the injury the next day. Anderson and the other members of the Crocodile Club were brought to trial, where all of them invoked their Fifth Amendment right. Because the prosecution was unable to learn who actually committed the murder, none of the students were charged. However, Yale faculty asked the Crocodile Club to disband and the students agreed.

## **Arrangement**

The materials are arranged chronologically.

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## Collection Contents

|             |                  |                  |
|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| b. 1, f. 1  | 1856 June 30     | 1856 June 30     |
| b. 1, f. 2  | 1857 November 7  | 1857 November 7  |
| b. 1, f. 3  | 1857 November 18 | 1857 November 18 |
| b. 1, f. 4  | 1857 December 12 | 1857 December 12 |
| b. 1, f. 5  | 1858 January 9   | 1858 January 9   |
| b. 1, f. 6  | 1858 February 19 | 1858 February 19 |
| b. 1, f. 7  | 1858 February 21 | 1858 February 21 |
| b. 1, f. 8  | 1858 March 3     | 1858 March 3     |
| b. 1, f. 9  | 1858 March 6     | 1858 March 6     |
| b. 1, f. 10 | 1858 March 18?   | 1858 March 18?   |
| b. 1, f. 11 | 1858 March 24    | 1858 March 24    |

## **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**

Trials (Murder) -- Connecticut -- New Haven

### **Names**

Anderson, William Henry, 1836-1902

Miles, William, -1858

### **Corporate Bodies**

Crocodile Club (Yale College)

Yale College (1718-1887). Class of 1859