

Yale University Library
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Guide to the Isaac Dewey Harmon Correspondence and Journals

WA MSS S-3455



Sarah Lerner

October 2020

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: WA MSS S-3455

CREATOR: Harmon, Isaac Dewey, 1814-1886

TITLE: Isaac Dewey Harmon correspondence and journals

DATES: 1831-1861

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.25 linear feet (3 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: 165 letters, two journals, and other ephemera, papers, and two tintypes by or relating to Isaac Dewey Harmon, 1831-1861. Letters concern Harmon's business and family affairs primarily in Chicago, Naperville, and Peru, Illinois. Among Harmon's correspondents are brother Charles Loomis Harmon, father E. D. Harmon, mother Welthyan Loomis Harmon, sister Harriet Harmon, sister Welthyan Loomis Harmon (later Welthyan Loomis Harmon Burley), and business partner Churchill Coffing. Journals document Harmon's travels to New Orleans, Louisiana; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, Maryland; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New York, New York; the Republic of Texas; and along the Mississippi River.

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

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.idharmon>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Michael Vinson on the Thomas W. Streeter Fund, 2017, and on the Frederick W. and Carrie S. Beinecke Fund for Western Americana, 2019 and 2020.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Isaac Dewey Harmon Correspondence and Journals is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Isaac Dewey Harmon Correspondence and Journals. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

These materials have been arranged and described according to national and local standards. For more information, please refer to the Beinecke Manuscript Unit Processing Manual.

Related Materials

Related Material: E. D. Harmon Letters to Isaac Harmon (WA MSS S-3258). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Biographical / Historical

Isaac Dewey Harmon (1814-1886) was born in Burlington, Vermont, to Dr. Elijah Dewey Harmon (1782-1869) and Welthyan Loomis Harmon (1783-1865). In 1830, Dr. E. D. Harmon moved to Chicago, Illinois--Isaac and siblings Charles Loomis Harmon (-1868), Harriet Harmon, Lucretia Harmon, and Welthyan Loomis Harmon (1825-1897) followed in 1831, while mother Welthyan Loomis Harmon remained in Burlington.

Isaac Harmon first found employment with George W. Dole, an Indian trader, while at the same time serving as a corporal at Fort Dearborn during the Black Hawk War in 1832. After the war, Harmon began the general trading firms Harmon, Loomis & Co. and I. D. Harmon & Co. He married Anne M. R. Huntoon Harmon (1817-1896) in 1842 and moved to Naperville in 1844, setting up the trading firm Harmon & Napier. In 1846, he began a forwarding, commission, and transportation business with E. D. Taylor in Peru (Taylor & Harmon) as well as Harmon & Huntoon. In 1855, the headquarters of Harmon & Huntoon was moved

to Chicago and the firm was combined with Chapin, Hurlbut & Co. to form the Union Line Transportation Company.

Isaac Harmon moved to Texas in 1870 to care for his property there before returning to Chicago in 1874 and continuing to work until 1876.

Scope and Contents

165 letters, two journals, and other ephemera, papers, and two tintypes by or relating to Isaac Dewey Harmon, 1831-1861. Letters concern Harmon's business and family affairs primarily in Chicago, Naperville, and Peru, Illinois. Among Harmon's correspondents are brother Charles Loomis Harmon, father E. D. Harmon, mother Welthy Loomis Harmon, sister Harriet Harmon, sister Welthy Loomis Harmon (later Welthy Loomis Harmon Burley), and business partner Churchill Coffing.

Journals document Harmon's travels to New Orleans, Louisiana; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, Maryland; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New York, New York; the Republic of Texas; and along the Mississippi River.

Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Correspondence, 1831-1855. II. Journals, 1839-1859. III. Other Ephemera, Papers, and Photographs, 1840-1861, undated.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1831 September 11-1855 July 23

Series I contains 165 letters to or from Isaac Dewey Harmon. Letters concern both family and business matters primarily in Chicago, Naperville, and Peru, Illinois. Among the correspondents are brother Charles Loomis Harmon, father E. D. Harmon, mother Welthyhan Loomis Harmon, sisters Harriet Harmon and Welthyhan Loomis Harmon, and business partner Charles Coffing.

Series I is arranged alphabetically by sender.

b. 1, f. 1-7	<p>Coffing, Churchill to Isaac Dewey Harmon (7 folders)</p> <p>21 autograph letters, signed, from Churchill Coffing to Isaac Dewey Harmon concerning a business partnership between Coffing, Dewey, and E. D. Taylor. From Salisbury, Connecticut, Coffing writes of his finances and bank debts; requests updates on the construction of a warehouse in Peru, Illinois; and requests the dissolution of the partnership in 1850. Multiple letters mention cholera in New York in addition to economic conditions.</p> <p>Accompanied by partial typed transcripts made by dealer.</p>	1847 October 5-1850 May 20
b. 1, f. 8-18	<p>Harmon, Charles Loomis to Isaac Dewey Harmon (11 folders)</p> <p>30 autograph letters, signed, from Charles Loomis Harmon to Isaac Dewey Harmon concerning business matters relating to their partnership with H. G. Loomis (Harmon, Loomis & Co.). Charles writes from New York, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Detroit, Michigan; Naperville, Illinois; Saint Louis, Missouri; and Chicago, Illinois, noting the purchase of fabrics and other dry goods, attempts to secure investors and funding, and his hopes for the partnership. He also comments on economic and political conditions.</p> <p>Accompanied by partial typed transcripts made by dealer.</p>	1831 September 11-1841 August 8
b. 1, f. 19-24	<p>Harmon, Harriet to Isaac Dewey Harmon (6 folders)</p> <p>29 autograph letters, signed, from Harriet Harmon to brother Isaac Dewey Harmon concerning family matters. Letters have been sent from Chicago and Naperville, Illinois.</p>	1836 February 2-1855 July 23
b. 2, f. 25-30	<p>Harmon, Isaac Dewey to Charles Loomis Harmon (6 folders)</p> <p>11 autograph letters, signed, from Isaac Dewey Harmon to Charles Loomis Harmon detailing the economic and social conditions of Chicago, Illinois. Isaac writes of the health of the Harmon family, of his own economic prospects, and of his desire to open a store with Charles. He also requests from Charles information about Burlington, Vermont.</p> <p>An autograph agreement, signed, between Isaac and Elijah Dewey Harmon absolves Isaac of his financial obligations to his father; a manuscript copy of another agreement authorizes Charles Harmon to make decisions on Isaac's behalf while in a partnership between himself, Isaac, and H. G. Loomis.</p> <p>Accompanied by partial typed transcripts made by dealer.</p>	1831 October 2-1833 April 22
b. 2, f. 31-34	<p>Harmon, Welthyhan Loomis to Isaac Dewey Harmon (4 folders)</p> <p>18 autograph letters, signed, from Welthyhan Loomis Harmon (later Welthyhan Loomis Harmon Burley) to brother Isaac Dewey Harmon concerning family matters. Letters have been sent from Burlington, Vermont, and Chicago and Naperville, Illinois.</p>	1835 April 25-1847 September 28

b. 2, f. 35-43	<p>Harmon, Dr. Elijah Dewey and Welthyen Loomis Harmon correspondence with Isaac Dewey Harmon (9 folders)</p> <p>28 autograph letters, signed, between Isaac Dewey Harmon and Dr. Elijah Dewey Harmon and Welthyen Loomis Harmon concerning Isaac and his parents' health, the state of Harmon & Loomis Co., and the parties' respective travels. Isaac writes of having purchased land in Texas, of his experiences at Niagara Falls and Philadelphia, and of his struggles with leprosy. Welthyen writes of her impending move from Burlington, Vermont, to Chicago, Illinois; Elijah writes of his move from Naperville, Illinois, to Bastrop, Texas, and the possibility of growing crops for the Chicago market.</p>	1835 October 2-1841 December 20
b. 2, f. 44-51	<p>Other correspondents to Isaac Dewey Harmon (business) (8 folders)</p> <p>31 autograph letters, signed, from Solon Gee, Giles Spring, C. C. Smith, Charles Bingley Hosmer, Edwin R. Harmon, Hyrum Pearsons, Grant Goodrich, George A. O. Beaumont, Henry C. Meyers, I. Mark Smith, Mark Skinner, Henry Loomis Pearle, Thomas Hoyne, I. B. Loret, John Day, Samuel Lisle Smith, and William H. Clark to Isaac Dewey Harmon. Letters concern politics, economics, and personal health; included are letters of introduction on Harmon's behalf. Most letters have been sent from either Chicago, Illinois, or Washington, D.C.</p>	1834 March 15-1848 August 6
b. 3, f. 52	<p>Other correspondents to Isaac Dewey Harmon (family) (1 folder)</p> <p>8 autograph letters, signed, from wife Anne M. Harmon, sister Lucretia Harmon Hosmer, and brother-in-law James. F. Huntoon to Isaac Dewey Harmon concerning family matters. Most letters have been sent from Naperville, Illinois.</p>	1841 July 26-1848 February 15
b. 3, f. 53	Envelopes (1 folder)	undated

Series II: Journals, 1835 November 25-1859 October

Series II contains two journals documenting Isaac Dewey Harmon's travels to New Orleans, Louisiana; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, Maryland; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New York, New York; the Republic of Texas; and along the Mississippi River. Both journals also contain prose.

Series II is arranged chronologically.

b. 3, f. 54	<p>Journal (1 folder)</p> <p>Autograph manuscript journal (circa 175 pages), signed, kept by Isaac Dewey Harmon during his travels to New Orleans, Louisiana; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, Maryland; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and New York, New York. The journal also documents Harmon's time in Chicago, Illinois.</p>	1835 November 25-1836 December 26
b. 3, f. 55-58	<p>Journal (4 folders)</p> <p>Autograph manuscript journal (circa 420 pages, partially blank), signed, kept by Isaac Dewey Harmon during his travels through the Republic of Texas from 1839 November 21 to 1840 March 1. Journal includes descriptions of Galveston, Houston, and Austin, Texas, as well as New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Mississippi River. Later entries document Harmon's time in Chicago, Illinois, from 1840 March 1 to 1859 October.</p> <p>Accompanied by a partial typed transcript made by dealer.</p>	1839 November 21-1859 October

Series III: Other ephemera, papers, and photographs, 1840-1861, undated

Series III contains business cards, invitations, two tintype portraits of unidentified individuals, and other ephemera and papers.

Series III is arranged alphabetically by item type.

b. 3, f. 59	Business cards	undated
b. 3, f. 60	Invitations	1836-1840, undated
b. 3, f. 61	Tintype portraits (2)	circa 1850s
b. 3, f. 62	Other ephemera and papers	1840-1861, 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.

Geographic Names

Baltimore (Md.)
Chicago (Ill.)
Illinois -- Economic conditions -- 19th century
Illinois -- Social life and customs -- 19th century
Louisiana -- Description and travel
Maryland -- Description and travel
Mississippi River -- Description and travel
Naperville (Ill.)
New Orleans (La.)
New York (N.Y.)
New York -- Description and travel
Pennsylvania -- Description and travel
Peru (Ill.)
Philadelphia (Pa.)
Texas -- Description and travel
Washington (D.C.)

Genres / Formats

Diaries
Photographs
Tintypes (prints)

Occupations

Businessmen -- Illinois -- 19th century
Merchants -- Illinois -- 19th century

Names

Harmon, Charles Loomis, -1868

Acquired From

Michael Vinson, bookseller