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# Guide to the De Forest Family Papers

YCAL MSS 582



by Beinecke Staff

2012

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** YCAL MSS 582

**CREATOR:** De Forest family

**TITLE:** De Forest family papers

**DATES:** 1813-1953

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 3.75 linear feet (10 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The papers consist of correspondence, writings, personal papers, legal and financial records, and related papers of the De Forest family. There is also some correspondence relating to the Sergeant and Shepard families (who married into the De Forest family). Family members prominent in the papers include John Hancock De Forest, his wife Dotha Woodward, and their sons George Frederick De Forest, Henry Alfred De Forest, Andrew Woodward De Forest, and John William De Forest. The papers contain documents relating to John Hancock De Forest's company Humphreysville Manufacturing Company, based in Seymour, Connecticut. Drafts and publications by author John William De Forest, are also part of the papers. Tuberculosis, a book by John William De Forest's son, Louis Shepard De Forest, is also included in the papers.

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

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## 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.deforestjw>.

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](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

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

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Louis Effingham De Forest (Yale 1912), 1939.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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### Conditions Governing Use

The De Forest Family Papers 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.

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### Preferred Citation

De Forest Family Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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### Processing Information

This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and minimal organization, in 2012.

This collection includes materials previously identified by the following call numbers: Za De Forest, Uncat Za De Forest, and Za D362 +1.

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### Existence and Location of Copies

Portions of the collection are available on microfilm.

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### Associated Materials

De Forest Family Papers (MS 177). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Sergeant Family Papers (MS 806). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## De Forest Family

The De Forest family was a prominent New England family largely based in Connecticut. John Hancock De Forest owned the Humphreysville Manufacturing Company, a cotton textile mill, in Humphreysville (now Seymour), Connecticut. John Hancock De Forest and Dotha Woodward had four sons: George Frederick De Forest, who managed the Humphreysville Manufacturing Company following his father's death; Henry Alfred De Forest, a medical missionary and graduate of Yale University (B.A., 1832 and M.D., 1835); Andrew Woodward De Forest, a lumber businessman in New Haven; and John William De Forest, an author.

John William De Forest wrote essays, poetry, short stories, and novels (including *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*). De Forest's article "The Great American Novel," published in *The Nation*, is believed to be the first use of the expression.

The De Forest family has a number of connections with Yale University. Various De Forest family members are graduates of Yale and some established awards. David Curtis De Forest established the De Forest Fund and the De Forest Prize in English Oration at Yale College in 1823. John De Forest (B.A., 1826) established the De Forest Mathematical Prize in 1855 to recognize his son Erastus Lyman De Forest (B.A., 1854).

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## De Forest Family Tree

Family members who are prominent in the papers appear in boldface.

Benjamin De Forest (1749-1784) m. Mehitabel Curtis Lockwood (1751-1830)

-- 2 David Curtis De Forest (1774-1825) m. Julia Wooster (b. 1796)

--- 3 Carlos Maria De Forest (1813-) m. Margaret Watkins

-- 2 Benjamin DeForest (1780-1848) m. Alma Southmayd

-- 2 Ezra DeForest (1782-1868) m. Laura Wooster

-- 2 **John Hancock De Forest** (1776-1839) m. **Dotha Woodward** (d. 1847)

-- 3 **George Frederick De Forest** (1812-1883) m. **Caroline Elizabeth Sergeant** (b. 1822); **Anna Williams Sergeant** (b. 1838)

--- 4 Katharine De Forest

--- 4 Clara De Forest m. David James Burrell

--- 4 George Elliott De Forest m. Adeline Whiting Dix

--- 4 Robert De Forest

-- 3 **Henry Alfred De Forest** (1814-1858) m. **Catharine Sedgwick Sergeant** (1817-1896)

-- 3 **Andrew Woodward De Forest** (1817-1900) m. Lucretia Sturges Bennett (1820-1907)

--- 4 Eugene De Forest (1855-1929) m. Minnie Richards

--- 4 Charles Sturges De Forest (1853-1933) m. Lillian Ives

--- 4 Mary De Forest m. Duncan Leverich

--- 4 Edward m. Louise E. Hawley

--- 4 Lucia H. De Forest (1858-1886)

-- 3 **John William De Forest** (1826-1906) m. **Harriet Silliman Shepard** (1833-1878)

---- 4 Louis Shepard De Forest (1857-1938) m. Annie C. Everit (d. 1932)

----- 5 Charles Shepard De Forest

----- 5 **Louis Effingham De Forest**

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## Sergeant Family Tree

Sewall Sergeant (1789-1858) m. Clarissa Partridge (1793-1860)

-- 2 **Catharine Sedgwick Sergeant** (1817-1896) m. **Henry Alfred De Forest** (1814-1858)

-- 2 George Sergeant (1820-1875) m. Lydia A. Clark (d. 1863)

-- 2 **Caroline Elizabeth Sergeant** (b. 1822) m. **George Frederick De Forest** (1812-1883)

- 2 Susan Sergeant (1825-1827)
  - 2 Sewall Sergeant (1827-1890) m. Alma Mercein
  - 2 Clarissa Partridge Sergeant (1829-1846)
  - 2 Susan Emily Sergeant (b. 1832) m. Alfred H. Dashiell
  - 2 John Elliott Sergeant (1835-1895) m. Caroline H. Matthews
  - 2 **Anna Williams** (b. 1838) m. **George Frederick De Forest**(1812-1883)
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## Shepard Family Tree

Charles Upham Shepard (1804-1886) m. Harriet Taylor

- 2 **Harriett Silliman Shepard** (1833-1878) m. **John William De Forest**(1826-1906)
  - 2 Fanny Shepard m. Charles Pickney James
  - 2 Charles Upham Shepard, Junior
- 

## Scope and Contents

The papers consist of correspondence, writings, personal papers, legal and financial records, and related papers of the De Forest family. There is also some correspondence relating to the Sergeant and Shepard families (who married into the De Forest family). Family members prominent in the papers include John Hancock De Forest, his wife Dotha Woodward, and their sons George Frederick De Forest, Henry Alfred De Forest, Andrew Woodward De Forest, and John William De Forest. John Hancock De Forest's brothers, Benjamin and Ezra De Forest, and their children are also represented in the papers.

Drafts and printed material by and relating to John William De Forest provide insight into his writing career. De Forest's career is similarly reflected in contracts and correspondence with publishers. The Writings series also includes his son Louis Shepard De Forest's book *Tuberculosis as a local and contagious disease in New Haven* (1891).

Family papers contain business and genealogy documents. Warranty deeds, wills, and estate documents trace the De Forest's wealth and connection to Connecticut history. A number of warranty deeds reflect the De Forest's acquisition of property in Seymour, Derby, and New Haven, Connecticut. Some legal and financial records relate to John Hancock De Forest's company, the Humphreysville Manufacturing Company, and Seymour (formerly Humphreysville), Connecticut. An inventory of Dotha Woodward De Forest's estate following her death lists the contents of the De Forest's home, such as furniture, books, clothing, and other household effects, which combined provide insight into the life of a Connecticut family in the mid-nineteenth century. Military papers and a passport for John William De Forest document his experience as a soldier. The Family Papers series also includes documents pertaining to the histories of the De Forest, Sergeant, and Shepard families.

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## Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Correspondence, 1813-1953. II. Writings, 1855-1871. III. Family Papers, 1839-1933.

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence, 1813-1953

0.83 linear feet (2 boxes)

The series documents the De Forest family, in addition to families related to the De Forests by marriage including the Sergeant and Shepard families, dating from 1813 to 1953. The correspondence largely reflects the familial bonds between various generations of the De Forest family. John William De Forest's correspondence with publishers reflects his writing career. Third party correspondence with Louis Effingham De Forest pertains to his work preserving the De Forest family history.

Charles Upham Shepard, a mineralogist, corresponded with a number of prominent figures, including Charles Darwin and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

De Forest, Andrew Woodward		
b. 1, f. 1	Letter to David James Burrel	1894
b. 1, f. 2	Letters to George Frederick De Forest	1825-1836
b. 1, f. 3	Letters to John Hancock and Dotha Woodward De Forest	1827-1836
b. 1, f. 4	Letter from George W. Edwards	1838 January 4
b. 1, f. 5	Letter from Charles Cutler Prince	1833-1845
De Forest, Benjamin		
b. 1, f. 6	Letters to Andrew Woodward De Forest	
b. 1, f. 7	Letter to John Hancock De Forest	1826 November 21
b. 1, f. 8	De Forest, Carlos Maria, letters to various family members	1826-1837
b. 1, f. 9	De Forest, Caroline Sergeant, letters to various family members 12 letters to family members including 7 letters to her brother George Sergeant, 3 to Susan Sergeant Dasheil, 1 to her sister Katherine Sergeant De Forest, and 1 to her mother Clarissa Sergeant	1844-1862
De Forest, Dotha Woodward		
b. 1, f. 10	Letters to George, Henry and Andrew De Forest	1823-1839
b. 1, f. 11	Letters from Sarah Woodward Smith	1826-1835
b. 1, f. 12	Letters from Elijah Woodward	1827-1828
b. 1, f. 13	De Forest, Ezra, letters to John Hancock De Forest	1826-1828
b. 1, f. 14	De Forest, George Elliott, letters to Marjorie Ryan	1953 July
De Forest, George Frederick		
b. 1, f. 15	Letters to Andrew Woodward De Forest	1833-1865

## De Forest, George Frederick (continued)

b. 1, f. 16	Letters to John Hancock and Dotha Woodward De Forest	1825-1829
b. 1, f. 17	Letter to Henry De Forest	1823 August 9
b. 1, f. 18	Letter to Caroline Elizabeth Sergeant De Forest	1857
b. 1, f. 19	Letter from Noah Porter	1842 July 22
b. 1, f. 20	De Forest, Harriet Silliman Shepard, letters to Andrew De Forest	undated
De Forest, Henry Alfred		
b. 1, f. 21	Letters to Andrew Woodward De Forest 11 letters	1834-1839
b. 1, f. 22	Letters to George Frederick De Forest and George Sergeant	1832-1837
b. 1, f. 23	Letters to John Hancock De Forest	1835-1836
b. 1, f. 24	Letters to John Hancock and Dotha Woodward De Forest	1825-1835
b. 1, f. 25	Letters to John William De Forest	1835-1837
b. 1, f. 26	De Forest, John, letters to John Hancock De Forest 3 letters to his uncle	1826-1827
De Forest, John Hancock		
b. 2, f. 27	Letters to Andrew De Forest	1829-1839
b. 2, f. 28	Letters to Dotha Woodward De Forest	1813-1829
b. 2, f. 29-30	Letters to George and Henry De Forest	1823-1839
b. 2, f. 31	Letters from W. M. Stebbins	1829
b. 2, f. 32	Letters from miscellaneous senders	1826-1827
De Forest, John William		
b. 2, f. 33	Letter to Mr. Buckingham	1891 July 7
b. 2, f. 34	Letters to Caroline Sergeant De Forest	1851-1855
b. 2, f. 35	Letters to Dotha Woodward De Forest	undated
b. 2, f. 36	Letters to George Frederick De Forest	1846-1852
b. 2, f. 37	Postcards to Harriet Silliman Shepard De Forest	1878
b. 2, f. 38	Letters to Louis and Eugene De Forest	1888-1901
b. 2, f. 39	Letters to Lucretia De Forest	1848-1853
b. 2, f. 40	Letters to Harpers	1865-1887
b. 2, f. 41	Letters from William Dean Howells	1878-1902
b. 2, f. 42	Letters to Putnam and Underwood	1859-1886



## De Forest, John William (continued)

b. 2, f. 43	Letters to miscellaneous recipients	1828-1878
b. 2, f. 44	Miscellaneous correspondence	undated
b. 2, f. 45	Travel letters	1846-1855
b. 2, f. 46	Letters from publishers	undated
b. 2, f. 47	Letters from miscellaneous senders	1829-1901
b. 2, f. 48	De Forest, Catherine Sergeant, letters to George Sergeant and parents	1841-1848
De Forest, Louis Effingham		
b. 2, f. 49-50	Correspondence with researchers (including Anne Carabillo Jenovese)	1930-1938
b. 2, f. 51	Correspondence with Eugene Saxton	1939
b. 2, f. 52	Elliot, Charles Wyllys, letter to "My Lady"	undated
b. 2, f. 53	Sergeant, Abigail, letter to Dr. Thomas William	1751 September 19
Sergeant, Clarissa Partridge		
b. 2, f. 54	Letter to Catherine Sergeant De Forest	1846 June 29
b. 2, f. 55	Letters to Mrs. Starr	1832
Shepard, Charles Upham		
b. 2, f. 56-57	Letters to Benjamin Silliman	1843-1882
b. 2, f. 58	Letters from miscellaneous senders Including J. H. Braddy, Charles Darwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edward Hitchcock, Justus von Liebig, Leonard Lyell, R. C. Gilchrist, John Ruskin, William Graham Sumner, and 1 unidentified	undated
b. 2, f. 59	Shepard, Mase	1877 May 27

**Series II: Writings, 1855-1871, undated***2.5 linear feet (6 boxes)*

The series is largely comprised of documents reflecting John William De Forest's writing career, ranging from drafts to printed versions. In addition the series includes writings about John William De Forest.

The series also includes *Tuberculosis* written by John William De Forest's son, Louis Shepard De Forest, who was a medical doctor.

Series II is organized into two subseries: Writings by and about John William De Forest and Other Writings.

## Writings by and about John William De Forest

b. 3, f. 60	"Agnes' Dream," autograph manuscript and typescript drafts	undated
b. 3, f. 61-63	<i>The Bureau Major</i> , autograph manuscript and typescript drafts	undated
b. 3, f. 64	"The Cradle of the Human Race," printed version, <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i>	1878 February
b. 3, f. 65	"The Enchanted Voyage," original autograph manuscript draft, part four of <i>The Downing Legends</i>	before 1901
b. 3, f. 66	"For Hattie Silman Shepard's Commonplace Book of Poetry," autograph manuscript draft	1855
b. 3, f. 67	<i>Jesse De Forest: Founder of New York</i> , autograph manuscript draft	undated
b. 4, f. 68-69	<i>Kate Beaumont</i> , typescript and autograph manuscript drafts	before 1872
b. 4, f. 70	"Marcus and Hildegard," typescript and autograph manuscript drafts	undated
b. 4, f. 71-75	<i>Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty</i> , typescript	before 1867
b. 5, f. 76	<i>Poems: Medley and Palestina</i> , typescript and autograph manuscript drafts	before 1902
b. 5, f. 77	<i>Overland</i> , printed version with corrections	1871
b. 5, f. 78-79	<i>Playing the Mischief</i> , autograph manuscript draft	before 1875
b. 5, f. 80	"Poem," original autograph manuscript draft	undated
<i>A Volunteer's Adventures</i>		
b. 6, f. 81-83	Autograph manuscript draft	undated
b. 6, f. 84-85	Typescript with corrections	undated

## Writings by and about John William De Forest (continued)

b. 7, f. 86-87	Clippings of stories and articles by John William De Forest "Lieutenant Barker's Ghost Story"; "Parole D'Honneur"; "A Gentleman of the Old School"; "Was it a Ghost"; "My Life on the Plains"; "The Colored Member"; "Captain Horsfall's Romance"; "The Baby Exterminator"; "Captain Phil Glover as President"; "A Case of Vitrification"; "Ancient and Modern Cats" (1874); "Modern Cats" (1874); "Old John Raddle"; "Fate Ferguston"; "An Inspired Lobbyist"; "The Story of a Handkerchief"; "The City of Brass" (1869); "Yesebel"; "Rum Creeters is Women"; "The Drummer Ghost" (1869); "Chanet"; "The Duchesne Estate"; "Father Higgin's Preferment"; "Love in Mount Lebanon"; "The Lauson Tragedy"; "The Isle of the Puritans"; "Mrs. Pullet's Perversions"; "Mr Pullet's Mistake"; "The Taillefer Bell-Rings" (1869); "A Strange Arrival"; "A Night at Sea"; "My Neighbor, the Prophet"; "The Oversoul of Manse Roseburgh"; "The Man with a Nose like an Owl"; "A Queen of Society"; "Tom Mallory's Revenge"; "The Hasheesh Eater"; "The Hungry Heart"; "Caesar's Art of War and of Writing"	undated
b. 7, f. 88	Pamphlets about John William De Forest "John William De Forest" by David Porter (1951); <i>Union College Bulletin</i> (1931-32)	1931, 1951
b. 7, f. 89	Clipping about John William De Forest	undated
b. 8, f. 90-91	"John William De Forest: Realist and Soldier" by Anne Jenovese, unpublished thesis; typescript	undated
b. 8, f. 92-94	"John William De Forest" by James F. Light, original typescript draft	1965
Other Writings		
b. 8, f. 95	<i>Tuberculosis</i> by Louis Shepard De Forest	1891
b. 8, f. 96	Griffin, George Butler, writing on David Curtis De Forest	undated

**Series III: Family Papers, 1839-1933***0.42 linear feet (2 boxes)*

The series contains various documents relating to the De Forest family's businesses and personal lives. A number of records pertain to the Humphreysville Manufacturing Company and the De Forest's acquisition of various real estate in Seymour, Connecticut. John Hancock De Forest's will and the inventory of his home with Dotha Woodward De Forest provide insight into the wealth and property of a prominent Connecticut family.

Series III is organized into two subseries: Business Papers and Genealogy Papers.

Business Papers		
b. 9, f. 97	De Forest, Andrew Woodward, miscellaneous business papers	1839-1872
b. 9, f. 98	De Forest, Dotha Woodward, inventory of estate	1848 January 21
b. 9, f. 99	De Forest, George Frederick, articles of agreement	1844-1854
De Forest, John Hancock		
b. 9, f. 100	Warranty deeds	1821-1823
b. 9, f. 101	Will and estate	1837-1839
De Forest, John William		
b. 9, f. 102	Miscellaneous papers, warranty deed, passport, bills	1849-1902
b. 9, f. 103	Military records	1864-1897
b. 9, f. 104	Contracts with publishers	1867-1903
b. 9, f. 105	Biographical material	1916-1933
b. 9, f. 106	List of periodicals reviewing De Forest's works	undated
Genealogy Papers		
b. 10, f. 107-108	De Forest Family	undated
b. 10, f. 109	Parridge Family	undated
b. 10, f. 110	Sergeant Family	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**

American literature -- 19th century

### **Geographic Names**

Connecticut -- Social life and customs -- 19th century

Seymour (Conn.) -- History -- 19th century

### **Names**

De Forest, Andrew Woodward, 1817-1900

De Forest, Dotha Woodward, d. 1847

De Forest, George Frederick, 1812-1883

De Forest, Henry Alfred, 1814-1858

De Forest, John Hancock, 1776-1839

De Forest, John William, 1826-1906

De Forest, Louis Effingham, 1891-

De Forest, Louis Shepard, 1857-1938

### **Families**

De Forest family

Sergeant family

Shepard family

### **Corporate Body**

Humphreysville Manufacturing Company