

# Guide to the Laurance Johnson Carmalt Papers

MS 847



compiled by William E. Brown, Jr.

February 1983

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 847

**CREATOR:** Carmalt, Laurance Johnson, 1866-

**TITLE:** Laurance Johnson Carmalt papers

**DATES:** 1914-1938

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1.5 linear feet

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Correspondence, notes, and printed matter reflecting Carmalt's professional activity as an engineer and his avocational interest in city planning in New Haven and other areas of Connecticut. The largest part of the papers relate to city planning for New Haven (1923-1938) and includes files on transportation, property development, and zoning. Also included are materials from the Fairfield County Planning Association and the New England Regional Planning Commission between 1933 and 1936. As a supervising engineer in the Civil Works Administration, Carmalt was active in devising and advocating programs to combat unemployment during the Depression. His association with the American City Planning Institute and the American Society of Civil Engineers is documented with correspondence and printed matter again focusing on Carmalt's interest in city planning.

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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/mssa.ms.0847>.

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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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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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### Conditions Governing Use

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### Preferred Citation

Laurance Johnson Carmalt Papers (MS 847). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Laurance J. Carmalt (1866-1940): engineer and roadmaster for Norfolk and Western Railroad, 1891-1893; for Southern Railway Company, 1894-1898; for New York Central and Hudson River Railroad, 1898-1899; for Long Island Railroad Company, 1901-1908; vice-president, Baldwin Engineering Company, New York City, 1909-1910; worked for New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad, 1911-1921; consulting civil engineer, New Haven, 1921-1933; engineer and advisor, Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration, 1933-1935; member of various zoning and planning commissions in Connecticut, 1928-.

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## Biographical / Historical

Father, William Henry Carmalt (M.D. Columbia 1861; M.A. Hon. Yale 1881 and LL.D. 1929), professor of ophthalmology and otology Yale University 1879-81 and professor of principles and practice of surgery 1881-1907; member board of directors General Hospital Society of Connecticut; established Beaumont Lectureship at Yale; son of Caleb and Sarah (Price) Carmalt of Friendsville, Pa. Mother, Laura Woolsey (Johnson) Carmalt; daughter of Samuel Johnson (M.A. Hon. 1819) and Laura (Woolsey) Johnson. Yale relatives include: Benjamin Woolsey (B.A. 1709), Samuel Johnson (B.A. 1714), and Jonathan Edwards (B.A. 1720) (great-great-great-grandfathers); Timothy Dwight (B.A. 1744), William S. Johnson (B.A. 1744), Benjamin Woolsey (B.A. 1744) (great-great-grandfathers); William Johnson (B.A. 1748) (great-great-great-uncle); Timothy Dwight (B.A. 1769), Robert C. Johnson (B.A. 1783), Theodore Dwight (M.A. Hon. 1798), Nathaniel Dwight (M.A. Hon. 1815) (great-great-uncles); Samuel W. Johnson (B.A. 1779) (great grandfather); John M. Woolsey (B.A. 1813), William C. Woolsey (B.A. 1813), Theodore D. Woolsey (B.A. 1820), Edwards Johnson (B.A. 1823), Robert C. Johnson (M.A. Hon. 1830) (great-uncles); and Woolsey Carmalt '83 (cousin).

Hillhouse High School, New Haven. First dispute appointment and exhibition speaker Junior year; second dispute appointment Senior year; third English composition prize Sophomore year; judge fall regatta Yale University Boat Club Sophomore year; on Yale Athletic Team Junior year; member of Yale Assembly.

Attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology 1888-90; engaged in engineering work in southwest Virginia 1890; in maintenance of way department Norfolk & Western Railway Company at Roanoke, Va., 1891-93; assistant engineer and later roadmaster Southern Railway Company, Greensboro, N.C., 1894-98; roadmaster subdivision No. 3 at Peekskill and then division engineer at Corning, New York Central &

Hudson River Railroad 1898-99; assistant engineer United States Engineer Corps, Puerto Rico, 1900-01; first assistant engineer Long Island Railroad Company, 1901-08; vice president Baldwin Engineering Company, New York City, 1909-10; engineer maintenance of way and later assistant to chief engineer New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company 1911-21; consulting civil engineer New Haven 1921-33; supervising engineer and planning advisor Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration 1933 until retirement 1935; chairman Hamden (Conn.) Zoning Commission 1930-1935; on advisory committee New England Regional Planning Commission, National Resources Board, 1934; author: *Guide Book of New Haven and Yale University* (1933); contributed to engineering journals; director Society of Terminal Engineers and Sleeping Giant Park Association; member Hamden Chamber of Commerce (vice-president 1937-1939), Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, Connecticut Forest and Park Association, Connecticut Society of Civil Engineers, Yale Engineering Association, American Institute of City Planning, American Planning and Civic Association, American Society of Civil Engineers (president Connecticut Section), and Christ Church (Episcopal), Stratford, Conn.

Married February 14, 1906, in Philadelphia, Helen Frances Clay (Yale School of Music 1924-25), daughter of Alfred Lausatt and Helen Frances (O'Callahan) Clay. Adopted daughter: Marjorie Ashmead (Barnard Coll. 1934-1935), the wife of Henry Chittenden Barbour, '34S. Mrs. Carmalt died May 2, 1927.

Death due to hypernephroma and generalized metastases. Buried in Evergreen Cemetery, New Haven. Survived by daughter, a grandson, and two sisters, Miss Geraldine W. Carmalt (certificate of art Yale 1896), and Miss Ethel Carmalt of New Haven.

[*Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University, 1939/1940*]

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of Laurance Johnson Carmalt consist of correspondence, notes, and printed material from 1914-1938. The papers total fifteen inches in quantity and document Carmalt's professional activity as a civil engineer and city planning enthusiast. The bulk of this material focuses on the New Haven and Connecticut areas, but there are also files relating to New England and New York.

Carmalt was a member of the American City Planning Institute and files for this organization contain correspondence relating to annual meetings and the content of programs at these gatherings. A variety of reports and recommendations submitted to members for consideration is also found here. Housing files for the Institute (folders 5-8) contain correspondence, printed material, and notes for the development and organization of housing projects within city planning programs.

Carmalt was also a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers-Connecticut Section, and he served as its president for a time in the 1920s. Correspondence regarding Carmalt's activities in this arena includes routine letters announcing meetings, proposing new members, and informing members of the decisions of various committees and councils. The Connecticut section also took an active role in supporting the creation of topographical maps and geological surveys for the state. Material relating to a geodetic survey in 1935-1936 is arranged here.

From 1933-1935 Carmalt was a supervising engineer and planning advisor to the Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration. In this capacity he compiled population and employment figures for Connecticut communities. Carmalt also advocated municipal works projects, housing programs, and zoning ordinances to help municipalities combat the problems of the Depression. He often publicized his views on these matters in letters to local newspapers. One such letter to the *New Haven Journal-Courier* contained a passage in which he summarized the state of municipal planning as in "... a stage of evolution in which past practices and standards, and past land values have been violently upset by sudden advances in the art of communication, through which economic and social considerations can disregard political bounds."

Carmalt was an active figure in New Haven city planning efforts in the 1920s-1930s. Material on this topic includes general files on property development and zoning matters. Transportation files contain material on specific traffic projects, street-widening programs, and proposed studies. Files for the Fairfield County Planning Association, the New England Regional Planning Commission, New Haven County Planning, and

the Regional Plan Association, Inc., (New York), reflect his commitment to the city planning movement on a regional and national scale.

Additional files contain correspondence and research materials Carmalt compiled as a member of the New Haven Committee on the City Hall Site. In his capacity as an engineer and city planning consultant Carmalt was most interested in the building plans for New Haven. Files for the New Haven Taxpayers, Inc., contain correspondence and printed material which document the financial costs of city planning programs.

The Laurance J. Carmalt papers are one of three collections of New Haven city planners housed here. The George Dudley Seymour papers (ms. gr. no. 442) document city planning developments ca. 1907-1925, and the Edward J. Logue papers (ms. gr. no. 959) document similar efforts from 1954-1960. Another political collection describing city planning efforts in New Haven is the Major Richard C. Lee papers. The papers of John V. Lindsay (ms. gr. no. 592) detail his municipal career, including planning developments, as mayor of New York City.

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## Collection Contents

	American City Planning Institute	
b. 1, f. 1 - 4	General	1928-1938, undated
b. 1, f. 5 - 8	Housing	1934-1937, undated
	American Society of Civil Engineers	
b. 1, f. 9 - 14	Connecticut section	1923-1925
b. 2, f. 15 - 19	Connecticut section	1926-1938, undated
b. 2, f. 20	Geodetic survey	1935-1936, undated
b. 2, f. 21	City planning—notes	undated
b. 2, f. 22 - 23	Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration	1933-1935, undated
b. 2, f. 24 - 25	Fairfield County Planning Association	1933-1936, undated
b. 2, f. 26	New England Regional Planning Commission	1935
	New Haven city planning	
b. 2, f. 27 - 28	General	1923-1938
b. 2, f. 29 - 30	Transportation	1924-1935, undated
b. 3, f. 31	New Haven Committee on the City Hall Site	1924-1926
b. 3, f. 32	New Haven County Planning A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1930-1938
b. 3, f. 33 - 35	New Haven Taxpayers, Inc. A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1934-1938, undated
b. 3, f. 36	New Haven zoning ordinances	1922-1932
b. 3, f. 37	Regional Plan Association, Inc.	1930-1938, undated
b. 3, f. 38	Stratford, Connecticut—property transactions	1914-1930

## **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**

City planning -- Connecticut -- New Haven  
Depressions -- 1929 -- United States  
Public service employment -- Connecticut  
Urban renewal

### **Geographic Names**

Connecticut  
United States -- Politics and government

### **Occupations**

Civil engineers

### **Names**

Carmalt, Laurance Johnson, 1866-

### **Corporate Body**

American Society of Civil Engineers