

# Guide to the Battell Family Papers

MS 906



compiled by staff of Manuscripts and Archives

August 1982

Yale University Library  
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(203) 432-1735  
(203) 432-7441  
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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 906

**CREATOR:** Battell family

**TITLE:** Battell family papers

**DATES:** 1810-1894

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 2.08 linear feet (4 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The papers consist of ninety-four family letters (1810-1853), the diaries of Sarah Robbins Battell and three of her daughters, and twenty-seven letters (1889-1894) to Robbins Battell.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0906>

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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.0906>.

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

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Transferred from the Yale University Music Library; gift of Nina Rosenbloom, 2016.

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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

Battell Family Papers (MS 906). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Joseph Battell (1774-1841) was born in Milford, Connecticut on July 21, 1774. As a young boy his family moved to Woodbury and again to Torrington. At the age of eighteen Battell began a mercantile career. He married Sarah Robbins (1779-1854), the daughter of Ammi Ruhamah Robbins, the first minister of Norfolk, Connecticut. Joseph and Sarah had nine children:

Joseph (1806-1874), Philip (1807-1897), Sarah (1810-1878), Irene (1811-1877), Urania (1814-1887), Anna (1816-1889), [Ammi Ruhamah] Robbins (1819-1895), John (1822-1892), Ellen (1825-1893).

Joseph Battell (1806-1874) graduated from Middlebury College in 1823. He became a merchant and was a business associate of Thomas Egleston. Battell was a benefactor of Yale College and Battell Chapel is named in his honor.

Sarah Battell married Joseph Eldridge.

Irene Battell was born on November 14, 1811. In July, 1843 she married William Augustus Larned, a professor of rhetoric and English literature at Yale. Irene Larned was a leading patroness of the musical arts in New Haven and at Yale.

Urania Battell married James Humphrey, a cousin of Noah Porter's.

Robbins Battell was born on April 9, 1819. He graduated from Yale in 1839. Following the death of his father in 1841, Robbins Battell took on the responsibility for the family estate and investments, a task to which he devoted much of his life. He served as the representative from Norfolk in the state legislature in 1852, 1858, and 1860. In the years of the Civil War he devoted his time and means largely to the support of the government, and in 1865 served as a member of the state senate and in 1866 as state comptroller. On August 15, 1849 Robbins Battell married Ellen Ryerson Mills (1825-1851).

Ellen Battell (1825-1893) married Azariah Eldridge.

(Information for this sketch was taken from *Memories of Irene Battell Larned* and the *Yale Obituary Record*.)

## Scope and Contents

The Battell family papers consist of correspondence and the diaries of Sarah (Robbins) Battell, Anna Battell, Urania (Battell) Humphrey, and Irene (Battell) Larned. According to *Memories of Irene Battell Larned* (Yca/826/L3m), the habit of keeping the diaries developed in the following manner:

"An interesting custom which prevails in Mrs. Larned's family—one which was introduced by her mother, who faithfully adhered to it through all her married life—is that of keeping a brief record of the most interesting events of every day on fly leaves inserted in the yearly almanac. The children and grandchildren have been taught to regard this as almost a sacred custom; and so extensively has it been observed that throughout the different branches of the family, one might find, in these little books, the definite story of their doings and experiences for three quarters of a century."

The book goes on to say that "Mrs. Larned used to claim as her special New Year's prerogative the pleasure of sending large numbers of the new almanac to her brothers and sisters, nieces, and other relatives." (page 39)

Sarah Battell's diary entries begin in 1818 and record her day-to-day life, notes of births and deaths, recipes, and so forth, until the day of her death. On August 7, 1854, her daughter Anna records Sarah's last illness and death; Anna continues the diary until 1885. Also in the collection are segments of diaries, kept in the same style as those of Sarah and Anna, of Urania (Battell) Humphrey of Louisville, Kentucky, and of Irene (Battell) Larned of New Haven, Connecticut. Supplementing the diaries are approximately ninety-five family letters. These are for the most part letters of Sarah Battell to and from her husband and children, and of her son Robbins Battell to his wife, Ellen Mills. The letters discuss events in the family's daily life, as well as mentioning occasional financial matters.

There are also twenty-seven letters, dated 1889 to 1894, mainly concerned with various artworks, and addressed to Robbins Battell.

The Battell Family Papers were transferred to Manuscripts and Archives from the Yale Music Library.

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## Collection Contents

### Original accession

b. 1, f. 1 - 20	Correspondence	1810-1853
b. 2, f. 21 - 23	Diaries of Sarah (Robbins) Battell	1818-1854
b. 3, f. 24 - 25	Diaries of Anna Battell	1855-1885
b. 3, f. 26	Diary of Urania (Battell) Humphrey	1837-1846
b. 3, f. 26	Diary of Irene (Battell) Larned	1843-1849

**Accession 2017-M-030: Additional material, 1889–1894**

Material consists of correspondence from multiple individuals and many concern music and art.

b. 1, f. 1

Correspondence to Robbins Battell

1889–1894

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## **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**

Families  
Women -- Connecticut

### **Geographic Names**

Louisville (Ky.) -- Social life and customs  
New Haven (Conn.) -- Social life and customs

### **Genres / Formats**

Diaries

### **Names**

Battell, Anna, 1816-1889  
Battell, Joseph, 1774-1841  
Battell, Joseph, 1806-1874  
Battell, Philip, 1807-1897  
Battell, Robbins, 1819-1895  
Battell, Sarah Robbins, 1779-1854  
Battell, Urania, 1814-1887  
Goodman, Epaphras, 1790-1862  
Larned, Irene Battell, 1811-1877  
Lawrence, William, 1801-1867

### **Corporate Body**

Yale University -- Students