

Guide to the Robert Brown Papers

MS 934



compiled by Staff of Manuscripts and Archives

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 934

CREATOR: Brown, Robert, 1836-1911

TITLE: Robert Brown papers

DATES: 1853-1908

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.25 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Correspondence and legal and financial papers relating to a controversy with Yale University over a house to be constructed for Robert Brown's use as secretary of the Observatory. Included are letters from Hubert Anson Newton, William Whitman Farnam and William Kneeland Townsend. Also in the papers is correspondence concerning the Yale secret society, Scroll and Key.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Robert Brown Papers (MS 934). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

Robert Brown (Observatory Place, New Haven, Conn.,) was born at Cincinnati, Ohio, March 8, 1836. Prepared for college under Charles Mathews, principal of a private school in Cincinnati. Expecting to enter with the Class he was prevented by ill health until the third term of Freshman year when he joined the Class. After graduation, 1857-8, he spent a year as a student at the Yale Medical School with a special view to instruction in Comparative Anatomy, but the financial panic of 1857-8 prevented his pursuing the course he had selected and compelled him to enter business, which he did, beginning as a bookkeeper in his father's office in Cincinnati, continuing until 1866. He then became Assistant Secretary of the Cincinnati Gas Light and Coke Co., and subsequently filled the positions of Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice-President, remaining with the company 16 years. Soon after the organization of the new Astronomical Observatory at Yale he accepted the newly created office of Secretary of that department, which he has ever since held, but from which he has just offered his resignation to take place August 15, 1907, at the close of twenty-five years service.

At a meeting held at Cincinnati in 1864 to draft resolutions relative to the death of Professor Silliman he advanced a proposition which led to the formation of a Yale Club, believed to be the first one ever organized, of which he became the first secretary. In 1861-2 he was Treasurer of the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association of Cincinnati, and its Corresponding Secretary for the succeeding two years, declining election as President, for which office he was nominated. From 1863 to 1883 was a Director and Treasurer of the Theological and Religious Library, of which he is a life member. Was manager of the Cincinnati Public Library from 1864 to 1869; member of the School Board of Cincinnati, 1864-5, and Corresponding Secretary of the Cincinnati Horticultural Society from 1859 to 1868. He is a member of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, and of the Mohonk Indian Conference; member and fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and was Secretary of Section G at its meeting in Montreal in 1882; is life member of the American Microscopical Society; life member of the Historical Society of New Haven, of the American Forestry Association, of the Yale University Club, and of the Appalachian Club; a member of the Country and Graduates Club, both of New Haven; a charter member of the Yale Club, and of the U. C. D. Club, both of Cincinnati. He was prominent in the undergraduate movement which resulted in the first Yale Gymnasium building after plans submitted by him and his co-workers. At the first threatening of the Civil War he united with others in the organization of the Winfield Rifles, from which he resigned when there seemed no likelihood of the company being called into service. Subsequently during the Kilby Smith raid he was a member of the Storer Guards on duty as Provost Guard.

He married, Oct. 2, 1860, Miss Caroline P. Root of New Haven. Their only daughter, Caroline Ives Brown, born July 21, 1862, died April 4, 1863. Mr. and Mrs. Brown, in 1876, adopted two sisters, Flora Cooper, born August 5, 1864, and Jessie Leal, born January 20, 1867. The former married, June 6, 1889, Rev. Edward G. Fullerton, then pastor of a church in Worcester, Mass., later of the Park Street Church, Bridgeport, and since May, 1904, of the First Presbyterian Church, Wilkesbarre, Penn. Jessie married, June 25, 1897, Boynton W. McFarland, Instructor in Chemistry in the Hillhouse High School, New Haven.

Grandchildren: Edward Grier Fullerton, born June 8, 1890, proposes to graduate at Yale with the Class of 1912. Carol Brown McFarland, born Dec 12, 1898; Helen McFarland, born March 18, 1900, and Robert Parker McFarland, born January 20, 1904.

(Taken from *Biographical Record of the Class of 1857, Yale College*).

Scope and Contents

This small collection contains papers of Robert Brown. Almost all relate to arbitration with Yale University over a house to be constructed for his use while employed at the Astronomical Observatory. Included are letters of Hubert Anson Newton, William Whitman Farnam, William Kneeland Townsend, and other Yale officials, as well as legal and financial papers pertaining to the house. The remainder of the collection consists of correspondence concerning the Scroll and Key society.

Collection Contents

b. 1, f. 1 - 4	Correspondence A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1880-1888, 1899 February-Aug, 1901, 1907-1908
b. 1, f. 5	Miscellaneous papers relating to real estate	1886
b. 1, f. 6	Papers relating to the purchase of books	1887
b. 1, f. 7	"Copy of a 'Memorandum'" of the agreement between Robert Brown, Jr., and Yale College relating to the house to be constructed for his use in proximity to the observatory English	1889
b. 1, f. 8	Correspondence relating to Scroll and Key and other organizations	1853-1901

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

Medicine
Science

Names

Brown, Robert, 1836-1911
Farnam, William Whitman, 1844-1929
Newton, H. A. (Hubert Anson), 1830-1896
Townsend, William K. (William Kneeland),
1849-1907

Corporate Bodies

Kingsley Trust Association
Yale University. Observatory
Yale University -- Officials and employees