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Guide to the William Lyon Papers

GEN MSS 79



by Diane J. Ducharme

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 79

CREATOR: Lyon, William, 1748-1830

TITLE: William Lyon Papers

DATES: 1745-1926

BULK DATES: 1791-1833

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers contain correspondence and personal papers documenting the family life, business activities, and travels of William Lyon. Also included is a twentieth-century biographical sketch of Lyon.

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

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.lyon>.

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 on the Cecil J. Harribine Fund, 1987.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The William Lyon Papers are 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

William Lyon Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Scope and Contents

The William Lyon Papers consist of fifteen folders of correspondence and personal papers relating to the life and career of William Lyon (1748-1830). A New Haven native, Lyon was a merchant with Atwater and Lyon until 1795, when he became Cashier of the newly organized New Haven Savings Bank. He was also one of the founders of the Second Company of the Governor's Foot Guards.

There are two folders of letters in the collection, mostly by Lyon himself. Several date from his 1795 trip to Litchfield as Agent of the Lottery for the Encouragement of Manufacturing and discuss his travels, lottery business, and family news. Letters to his children contain advice and topical comments; for example, in March 1818 he noted that "Republicanism is triumphant throughout the state. Even in New Haven it is not so infamous to be a friend to the rights of man as it once was." There are also single letters by his wife, Lois Mansfield Lyon; his daughter Sarah Lyon Law; and Jared Mansfield, whose 1799 letter from Philadelphia discusses the possibility of war with France.

The personal papers fill thirteen folders, and include Lyon's militia commissions; a proposal for the unification of area churches; the minutes of the Lottery Commission for 1794-75; two circular letters from the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, with two brief drafts of papers on the shape of the earth and decimal currency; and pieces of Lyon's membership certificate in the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society. A typescript of Lyon's journal for May-July 1823 is located in folder 8. This is a detailed record of his travels through upstate New York and Canada, and Lyon comments on such topics as the visible wreckage from the Battle of Plattsburgh; his impressions of Irish immigrants in Canada; his surprise at the courtesy of the British officers he encountered; and the damage to a Montreal house looted during a charivari, which he thought "appeared pretty much as my own house had in 1779 after the British visit." The collection also contains his eldest son's Yale diploma, several grocery accounts, and a biographical sketch of Lyon written in 1926.

Collection Contents

b. 1, f. 1-2	Correspondence	1791-1833 and undated
b. 1, f. 3	Accounts	1802-1821
b. 1, f. 4	Biographical sketch	1926
b. 1, f. 5	Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences	1800-1802 and undated
b. 1, f. 6	Diploma of William Lyon, Jr.	1810
b. 1, f. 7	First Society in New Haven	1795
b. 1, f. 8	Journal 1823 May-July (typescript)	[1926]
b. 1, f. 9	Legal records	1745-1792 and undated
b. 1, f. 10	Lottery for the Encouragement of Manufacturing	1794-1795
b. 1, f. 11	Militia commissions	1783-1794
b. 1, f. 12	Militia papers	1777-1793 and undated
b. 1, f. 13	Miscellaneous	1792-1919 and undated
b. 1, f. 14	Newspaper clippings	undated
b. 1, f. 15	Notebook	1764-1770

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

Lotteries -- Connecticut

Geographic Names

Canada -- Description and travel
Connecticut -- History -- 1775-1865
New Haven (Conn.)

Families

Lyons family