Bancroft-Bliss Families Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2011

Contact information: http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm75011700

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms011191

Prepared by Anita Nolen

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2011
Collection Summary
Title: Bancroft-Bliss Families Papers
Span Dates: 1788-1928
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1815-1875)
ID No.: MSS11700
Creator: Bancroft family
Creator: Bliss family
Extent: 5,800 items
Extent: 20 containers plus 3 oversize
Extent: 8.1 linear feet
Extent: 1 microfilm reel
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm75011700
Summary: Correspondence, diary, legal and financial papers, article and book galleys, invitations, and printed material of members of the Bliss and Bancroft families, including George Bancroft (1800-1891); his wife, Elizabeth Davis Bancroft (1803-1886), her first husband, Alexander Bliss (1792-1827); and their son, Alexander Bliss (1827-1896).

Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People
Bancroft family.
Bancroft, Elizabeth Davis, 1803-1886. Elizabeth Davis Bancroft papers.
Bancroft, George, 1800-1891. George Bancroft papers.
Bliss family.
Bliss, Alexander, 1792-1827. Alexander Bliss papers.
Bryant, William Cullen, 1794-1878--Correspondence.
Crane, Joseph G., 1825-1869--Correspondence.
Curtis, George William, 1824-1892--Correspondence.
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 1803-1882--Correspondence.
Estcomb, Caroline B.--Correspondence.
Hardwick, George--Correspondence.
Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 1804-1864--Correspondence.
Hay, John, 1838-1905--Correspondence.
Ingalls, Rufus, 1818-1893--Correspondence.
Kennedy, John Pendleton, 1795-1870--Correspondence.
Meigs, Montgomery C. (Montgomery Cunningham), 1816-1892--Correspondence.
Melville, Herman, 1819-1891--Correspondence.
Peabody, Elizabeth Palmer, 1804-1894--Correspondence.
Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849.
Sumner, Charles, 1811-1874--Correspondence.
Thoreau, Henry David, 1817-1862--Correspondence.
Van Buren, Angelica Singleton, 1816-1877--Correspondence.
Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852--Correspondence.
Williams, Lydia--Correspondence.

Organizations
United States. Army. Quartermaster's Department.

Subjects
Private schools--United States.

Places
Europe--Social conditions.
France--Social conditions.
Germany--Foreign relations--United States.
Germany--Social conditions.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.
Great Britain--Social conditions.
Italy--Social conditions.
United States--Biography--Encyclopedias.
United States--Foreign relations--Germany.
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Titles
Bancroft family papers
Bliss family papers

Provenance
The papers of the Bancroft-Bliss families were given to the Library of Congress by Elizabeth B. Bliss and William J. A. Bliss between 1928-1945. Some items were reproduced with permission of Elizabeth B. Bliss in 1944. Small additions were acquired by purchase in 1946 and gift in 1976.

Processing History
The papers of the Bancroft-Bliss families were arranged and described in 1974. An addition was made in 1983, and the finding aid was revised in 2011.

Transfers
Some photographs have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. Some maps have been transferred to the Geography and Map Division. Some books have been transferred to the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Bancroft-Bliss Families Papers.

Copyright Status
The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of the Bancroft-Bliss families is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions
The papers of the Bancroft-Bliss families are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation
Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Bancroft-Bliss Families Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
**Biographical Note**

**George Bancroft**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>A.B., Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818-1822</td>
<td>Studied in Germany, France, England, Switzerland, and Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>M.A., Ph.D., University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822-1923</td>
<td>Tutor in Greek, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Published <em>Poems</em>. Cambridge, [Mass.]: University Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>Married Sarah H. Dwight (died 1837)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834-1875</td>
<td>Published <em>History of the United States</em>. Boston: Little, Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Appointed collector, port of Boston, Mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Married Elizabeth Davis Bliss (died 1886)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1845-1846</td>
<td>Secretary of the navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846-1849</td>
<td>U.S. minister to Great Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Entered Union Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>Captain and assistant quartermaster, volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Captain and assistant quartermaster, regular army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>Published with John Pendleton Kennedy <em>Autograph Leaves of Our County's Authors</em>. Baltimore: Cushings &amp; Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Brevetted colonel, U.S. Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866-67</td>
<td>Married Eleanor Taylor Albert (died 1874)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867-74</td>
<td>Colonel and quartermaster of volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Resigned from the army</td>
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</table>

**Alexander Bliss**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
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<td>B.A., Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>Admitted to the bar, New York, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Entered Union Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>Captain and assistant quartermaster, volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Captain and assistant quartermaster, regular army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>Lieutenant colonel and quartermaster of volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Published with John Pendleton Kennedy <em>Autograph Leaves of Our County's Authors</em>. Baltimore: Cushings &amp; Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866-67</td>
<td>Married Eleanor Taylor Albert (died 1874)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867-74</td>
<td>Colonel and quartermaster of volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Resigned from the army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896, 30 Apr.</td>
<td>Died, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scope and Content Note**

The papers of the Bancroft-Bliss families span the period 1788-1928, but bulk largest during the periods 1815-1875. The collection contains family and general correspondence, invitations, a diary, financial and legal papers, and printed material. The papers are organized in four series: Family Correspondence, General Correspondence, *Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors*, and Miscellany.
Included are papers of George Bancroft (1800-1891), historian, secretary of the navy, and United States minister to England and Germany; papers of his wife, Elizabeth Davis Bancroft (1803-1886); papers of her first husband, Alexander Bliss (1792-1827), lawyer and junior partner of Daniel Webster; and papers of their son, Alexander Bliss (1827-1896), author, soldier, and secretary of the American legation at Berlin.

The Family Correspondence is primarily concerned with social and business conditions at home, reflections on the European scene during George Bancroft's years abroad, and Alexander Bliss's service as an officer in the Quartermaster's Department of the Union Army during and after the Civil War, especially regarding the Army of the Potomac.

Bliss's Civil War service is also reflected in the General Correspondence series in letters he received during and after the war from fellow army officers. This series also contains numerous letters from Daniel Webster to Alexander Bliss (1792-1827) for the period 1816 to 1827; they are concerned mainly with personal business matters and their law practice. Drafts of dispatches in the hand of Alexander Bliss (1827-1896), secretary of the United States legation at Berlin from 1867 to 1874, are also present. Prominent correspondents in this series include Joseph G. Crane, George William Curtis, Caroline B. Estcomb, George Hardwick, John Hay, Rufus Ingalls, Montgomery C. Meigs, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Charles Sumner, Angelica Singleton Van Buren, and Lydia Williams.

A separate series contains the manuscripts associated with the production of Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors, a volume of facsimiles of literary manuscripts produced to be sold at the United States Sanitary Commission Fair in Baltimore in 1864. Proceeds were to be used for the benefit of Union soldiers and their families. The manuscripts in the collection consist primarily of correspondence addressed to Alexander Bliss and John Pendleton Kennedy concerning contributions to the volume. (Most of the actual manuscripts reproduced in the book were sold at auction.) Correspondents in this series are primarily literary figures and include William Cullen Bryant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, and William M. Thackeray.

Among the Miscellany are a typescript and galleys of Elizabeth Davis Bancroft's Letters From England, 1846-1849 (New York, C. Scribner's Sons, 1904) in which she describes the social and political scene in London during the late 1840s, copies of letters to Elizabeth B. Bliss concerning asylums for Italian war orphans in the 1920s, a diary of Alexander Bliss for 1849, and a few speeches and manuscripts, including the galley proofs of an article on James K. Polk for Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, with annotations by George Bancroft.

An appendix to the finding aid contains an index of correspondents in the General Correspondence series, including the years of the correspondence.

### Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- **Family Correspondence, 1810-1902**
- **General Correspondence, 1788-1928**
- **Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors, 1863-1864**
- **Miscellany, 1820-1926**
Description of Series

**Container**  
**BOX 1-6**  
**Series**  
*Family Correspondence, 1810-1902*  
Letters sent and received between members of the Bancroft and Bliss families and photostatic copies of correspondence between family members.  
Arranged chronologically and grouped by correspondent.

**Container**  
**BOX 7-13**  
**Series**  
*General Correspondence, 1788-1928*  
Letters received, drafts of letters sent, photostatic copies of letters from George Bancroft, and invitations. An appendix to the finding aid contains an index of correspondents in this series, including the years of the correspondence.  
Correspondence arranged chronologically.

**Container**  
**BOX 14**  
**Series**  
*Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors, 1863-1864*  
Letters received from contributors to this volume and letters received from non-contributors concerning the book.  
Arranged alphabetically. Also miscellaneous material and printed matter.

**Container**  
**BOX 15-23**  
**Series**  
*Miscellany, 1820-1926*  
Calling cards, a diary of Alexander Bliss, financial papers, legal papers, manuscripts, speeches, writings, newspaper clippings, and other miscellaneous material.  
Arranged alphabetically.
## Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1-6</td>
<td><strong>Family Correspondence, 1810-1902</strong>&lt;br&gt;Letters sent and received between members of the Bancroft and Bliss families and photostatic copies of correspondence between family members.&lt;br&gt;Arranged chronologically and grouped by correspondent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>1814-1849</td>
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<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>1851-1869</td>
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<td>BOX 3</td>
<td>1870-1875</td>
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<td>BOX 4</td>
<td>1876-1902</td>
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<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>Photostatic copies</td>
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<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>Bliss to aunt, Lydia Williams, 1810-1813</td>
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<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>Bliss to wife, Betsy, 1827, Jan.-Feb.</td>
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<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>George Bancroft to wife, 1838-1861</td>
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<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>George Bancroft to William Bliss, 1849</td>
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<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>George Bancroft to Alexander (&quot;Sandy&quot;) Bliss</td>
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<td>BOX 5</td>
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<td>BOX 6</td>
<td>1862, Oct.-1865, undated</td>
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<td>BOX 6</td>
<td>George Bancroft to wife, 1866-1873, undated</td>
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<td>George Bancroft to William Bliss, 1883, undated</td>
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<td><strong>General Correspondence, 1788-1928</strong>&lt;br&gt;Letters received, drafts of letters sent, photostatic copies of letters from George Bancroft, and invitations. An appendix to the finding aid contains an index of correspondents in this series, including the years of the correspondence.&lt;br&gt;Correspondence arranged chronologically.</td>
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<td>BOX 12</td>
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<td>BOX 13</td>
<td>(1 folder)</td>
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<td>BOX 14</td>
<td><strong>Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors, 1863-1864</strong>&lt;br&gt;Letters received from contributors to this volume and letters received from non-contributors concerning the book.&lt;br&gt;Arranged alphabetically. Also miscellaneous material and printed matter.</td>
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<td>Box</td>
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<td>Correspondence with contributors</td>
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<td>BOX 14</td>
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<td>BOX 14</td>
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<td>BOX 14</td>
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<td>Cozzens, Frederick S.</td>
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<td>BOX 14</td>
<td>Emerson, Ralph Waldo</td>
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<td>BOX 14</td>
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<td>Correspondence with non-contributors</td>
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<td>Agassiz, Alexander</td>
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<td>BOX 14</td>
<td>Bancroft, Elizabeth Davis</td>
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<td>BOX 14</td>
<td>Bell, D. C.</td>
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## Container | Contents
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BOX 14 | Bliss, W. D.
BOX 14 | Bliss, William R.
BOX 14 | Bowes, C. J.
BOX 14 | Cary, Alice
BOX 14 | Cist, L. J.
BOX 14 | Coale, George B.
BOX 14 | Coale, James Carey
BOX 14 | Collins, Willkie
BOX 14 | Donaldson, [H?]
BOX 14 | Ford, L. C. Grant,
BOX 14 | Ulysses S.
BOX 14 | Innes, John
BOX 14 | Kelton, Frank A.
BOX 14 | Lossing, Benson
BOX 14 | Piozzi, Hester Lynch (Thrale)
BOX 14 | Ripley, George
BOX 14 | Schenck, Julia C.
BOX 14 | Thackeray, William M.
BOX 14 | Willmarth, C. A.
BOX 14 | Memorandum of receipt and distribution
BOX 14 | Printed matter

**BOX 15-23**

**Miscellany, 1820-1926**

Calling cards, a diary of Alexander Bliss, financial papers, legal papers, manuscripts, speeches, writings, newspaper clippings, and other miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically.

**BOX 15**

Announcements of births, deaths, marriages, and related matter

**BOX 15**

Atlas of the world

**BOX 15**

Calling cards Calling cards of the Chinese minister in Berlin, Germany

**BOX 15**

Clippings

**BOX 15**

Copies of letters from Elizabeth S. Woodruff to Elizabeth Bliss and others regarding asylums for Italian war orphans, circa 1925-1926

**BOX 15**

Diary of Alexander Bliss, 1849

**BOX 15**

Financial papers

**BOX 15**

Account of Alexander Bliss, 1862-1863

**BOX 15**

Accounts regarding Garibaldi Guards, 1861, 25 May-1 July

**BOX 15**

Miscellaneous accounts, 1848-1893

**BOX 15**

Law cases pled by Alexander Bliss (Sr.), 1820-1823

**BOX 16**

Legal papers

**BOX 16**

*Letters From England*, by Elizabeth D. Bancroft

**BOX 16**

Galleys

**BOX 16**

Typescripts

**BOX 16**

List of pensions in Florence

**BOX 16**

List of the corps diplomatique at Berlin, Germany, 1867, 1 Nov.

**BOX 16**

List of letters in the collection

**BOX 16**

Manuscripts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>BOX 16</td>
<td><em>Elin, or the Man of Rank and the Woman of the People, a Novel</em>, by Marie Sophie Schwartz (copy in hand of Alexander Bliss)</td>
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<td>BOX 16</td>
<td>Miscellaneous and unidentified</td>
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<td>BOX 16</td>
<td>Memorabilia and miscellaneous</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 16</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>BOX 16</td>
<td>Papers relating to the quartermaster general's office, 1862-1866</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 16</td>
<td>Passports and other certificates</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 16</td>
<td>Poems</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 17</td>
<td>Poetry in the hand of Alexander Bliss</td>
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<td>BOX 17</td>
<td>Printed matter</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Programs and menus</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Recipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>School papers</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Bliss, Alexander, 1841-1843</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Bliss, William D., 1838-1846</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>&quot;Sketch of Petaluma,&quot; by William D. Bliss, 1857</td>
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<td>Sketches</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Songbooks</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Specification for brick house for Cornelia A. Dikeman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Specification for stables for Colonel Alexander Bliss</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Speeches</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Inquiry regarding Major Burrell</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
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Jarves, Deming, 1845 (Boston & Sandwich Glass Co.)
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Kenyon, John, 1847, 1848
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