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: https://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 Manuscript Division staff
Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2011
Revised 2023 November
Collection Summary

Title: Bancroft-Bliss Families Papers
Inclusive Dates: 1788-1928
Bulk Dates: 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/mss11700
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

**Acquisition Information**
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 by Anita Nolen. 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

Date                  Event                                                                 
1817                  A.B., Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.                         
1818-1822             Studied in Germany, France, England, Switzerland, and Italy        
1820                  M.A., Ph.D., University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany          
1822-1823             Tutor in Greek, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.             
1823                  Published *Poems.* Cambridge, [Mass.]: University Press          
1827                  Married Sarah H. Dwight (died 1837)                                 
1834-1875             Published *History of the United States.* Boston: Little, Brown    
1837                  Appointed collector, port of Boston, Mass.                       
1838                  Married Elizabeth Davis Bliss (died 1886)                         
1845-1846             Secretary of the navy                                           
1846-1849             U.S. minister to Great Britain                                         
1853                  B.A., Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.                         
1861                  Admitted to the bar, New York, N.Y.                                 
1864                  Published with John Pendleton Kennedy *Autograph Leaves of Our County's Authors.* Baltimore: Cushings & Bailey
1865                  Breveted colonel, U.S. Army                                             
1866-67               Married Eleanor Taylor Albert (died 1874)                           
1867-74               Colonel and quartermaster of volunteers                                
1868                  Resigned from the army                                               
1889                  Published *Martin Van Buren to the End of His Public Career.* New York: Harper

Alexander Bliss

Date                  Event                                                                 
1847                  B.A., Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.                         
1853                  Admitted to the bar, New York, N.Y.                                 
1861                  Entered Union Army                                              
1862                  Captain and assistant quartermaster, volunteers                    
1863                  Captain and assistant quartermaster, regular army                  
1864                  Lieutenant colonel and quartermaster of volunteers                  
1865                  Published with John Pendleton Kennedy *Autograph Leaves of Our County's Authors.* Baltimore: Cushings & Bailey
1866-67               Breveted colonel, U.S. Army                                             
1867-74               Married Eleanor Taylor Albert (died 1874)                           
1868                  Resigned from the army                                               
1896, 30 Apr.         Died, Washington, D.C.                                      

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 Cyclopædia 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

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<td></td>
<td>Letters sent and received between members of the Bancroft and Bliss families and photostatic copies of correspondence between family members.</td>
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<td>Arranged chronologically and grouped by correspondent.</td>
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<td>Letters received, drafts of letters sent, photostatic copies of letters from George Bancroft, and invitations. An appendix to the finding aid contains an <em>index</em> of correspondents in this series, including the years of the correspondence.</td>
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<td>Correspondence arranged chronologically.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters received from contributors to this volume and letters received from non-contributors concerning the book.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arranged alphabetically. Also miscellaneous material and printed matter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 15-23</td>
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<td>Calling cards, a diary of Alexander Bliss, financial papers, legal papers, manuscripts, speeches, writings, newspaper clippings, and other miscellaneous material.</td>
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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. |
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| BOX 5     | George Bancroft to wife, 1838-1861 |
| BOX 5     | George Bancroft to William Bliss, 1849 |
| BOX 5     | George Bancroft to Alexander ("Sandy") Bliss |
| BOX 5     | 1851-1862, Sept. |
| BOX 6     | 1862, Oct.-1865, undated |
| BOX 6     | George Bancroft to wife, 1866-1873, undated |
| BOX 6     | George Bancroft to William Bliss, 1883, undated |
| BOX 7-13  | **General Correspondence, 1788-1928**  
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(1 folder) |
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| BOX 14    | **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. |
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**Bancroft-Bliss Families Papers**

**Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors, 1863-1864**

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<td>Copies of letters from Elizabeth S. Woodruff to Elizabeth Bliss and others regarding asylums for Italian war orphans, circa 1925-1926</td>
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## Miscellany, 1820-1926

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