Collection 164

Davis, Brown, and Yale families correspondence

Creators: Brown, Henry Kirke, 1814-1886
Davis family

1853-1879
1 boxes, 0.4 linear feet

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Processing Completed: December 2009
Sponsor: Randall Miller and anonymous
Restrictions: None

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Davis, Brown, and Yale families correspondence
Creators: Brown, Henry Kirke, 1814-1886
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Former collection name: William Morris Davis letters

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Abstract
William Morris Davis was a Philadelphia sugar refiner, abolitionist, Pennsylvania delegate to the 1856 Republican National Convention, and member of Congress from 1861 to 1863. He was born in Keene Valley, Essex County, New York on August 16, 1815. In 1845, he married Elizabeth M. Jacobs (b. 1824) of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He died on August 5, 1891 and is buried at the Friends Fair Hill Burying Ground in Philadelphia.

This small collection consists primarily of letters from William Morris Davis to Henry Kirke Brown, a New York sculptor. Also included are letters to Davis’s wife, Elizabeth, and letters from their friends Catherine Brooks Yale and her husband, Linus Yale, developer of the Yale lock. There are also a few letters from Henry Brown to William Morris Davis, as well as several congenial letters between Elizabeth Davis and Henry Brown's wife, Lydia. There are also two letters from Edward Parmele, chairman of the Clay Monumental Association of New Orleans, to the Browns.

The Davises (in Philadelphia) and Browns (in New York) seemed extremely close considering they lived some distance from each other. They mention a longing to see each other in many of their letters and often discussed plans to get together. It seems as though this was made difficult by William’s busy schedule and Lydia Brown’s health. Mrs. Brown was often described as “recovering” and was therefore unable to travel. Further demonstrating that the families were close, the Davis children referred to the Browns as “Aunty Lydia” and “Uncle Henry.”

William and Henry corresponded regularly throughout the 1850s and less frequently in the 1860s and 1870s, and William’s letters to Henry make up the bulk of the collection. While most of the letters appear to be routine correspondences, several topics emerge, such as Brown's sculptures, fly fishing, forging and casting, religion, machine tools, the Panic of 1857, and Republican politics. Davis also wrote about Passmore Williamson's imprisonment for contempt of court during a fugitive slave case in 1857, sending his daughter to Theodore Weld's school, his support for John C. Frémont's presidential candidacy, and his criticism of both James Buchanan and Abraham Lincoln. An 1861 letter gives an account of a confrontation between Jessie Benton Frémont and Francis Preston Blair in St. Louis. His letters make little mention of the war itself.
Separation report
None.

Subjects
  Depressions – 1857 – United States
  Sculptors
  Inventors
  United States – Politics and government – 1849-1877

Blair, Frank P. (Frank Preston), 1821-1875
Brown, Henry Kirke, 1814-1886.
Buchanan, James, 1791-1868
Davis, Elizabeth
Fremont, Jessie Benton, 1824-1902
Fremont, John Charles, 1813-1890
Parmele, Edward
Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865
Weld, Theodore Dwight, 1803-1895
Yale, Catherine Brooks
Yale, Linus, 1821-1868
Administrative Information

Restrictions
The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Preferred citation
Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Davis, Brown, and Yale families correspondence (Collection 164), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note
Processing made possible by a generous donation by Randall Miller.

The collection was formerly called the William Morris Davis letters.
## Box and folder listing

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry K. Brown to William Morris Davis</td>
<td>1854, 1855, 1857</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Mrs. Lydia Brown to Mrs. Elizabeth Davis</td>
<td>20 March 1856</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Elizabeth Davis to Mrs. Lydia Brown</td>
<td>1855-1878</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>William Morris Davis to Henry K. Brown</td>
<td>1853-1879</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4-7</td>
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<td>William Morris Davis to his wife and family</td>
<td>1861</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>William Morris Davis to Mrs. Lydia Brown</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>E. Parmele to Henry K. Brown</td>
<td>23 April 1856</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>E. Parmele to Mrs. Lydia Brown</td>
<td>13 September 1861</td>
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<td>Catherine (Kate) B. Yale to Mrs. Lydia Brown</td>
<td>1867-1872</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>Catherine (Kate) B. Yale to Henry K. Brown</td>
<td>6 April 1854</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Linus Yale to William Morris Davis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous letters</td>
<td>1860, undated</td>
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