



Historical Society
of Pennsylvania

Collection 164

Davis, Brown, and Yale families correspondence

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

1853-1879

1 boxes, 0.4 linear feet

Contact: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: (215) 732-6200 FAX: (215) 732-2680
<http://www.hsp.org>

Processed by: Cary Majewicz

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Restrictions: None

Davis, Brown, and Yale families correspondence

Creators: Brown, Henry Kirke, 1814-1886

Davis family

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
Republican Party. Pennsylvania.
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

Gift of Henry K. Bush-Brown, 1933.

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

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Henry K. Brown to William Morris Davis	1854, 1855, 1857	1	1
Mrs. Lydia Brown to Mrs. Elizabeth Davis	20 March 1856	1	2
Mrs. Elizabeth Davis to Mrs. Lydia Brown	1855-1878	1	3
William Morris Davis to Henry K. Brown	1853-1879	1	4-7
William Morris Davis to his wife and family	1861	1	8
William Morris Davis to Mrs. Lydia Brown	1878	1	9
E. Parmele to Henry K. Brown	23 April 1856	1	10
E. Parmele to Mrs. Lydia Brown	13 September 1861	1	10
Catherine (Kate) B. Yale to Mrs. Lydia Brown	1867-1872	1	11
Catherine (Kate) B. Yale to Henry K. Brown	6 April 1854	1	12
Linus Yale to William Morris Davis	1855	1	13
Miscellaneous letters	1860, undated	1	14