



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 1903

**Furness-Bullitt Family
Papers**

**1824-1967 (bulk 1852-1915)
5 boxes, 1.6 lin. feet**

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Abstract

The Furness-Bullitt Family Papers chronicle the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth-century lives of two prominent Philadelphia families, related by marriage. The majority of the collection centers on two individuals: Horace Howard Furness (1833-1912) and John Christian Bullitt (1824-1902). Their families were united when Walter Rogers Furness, the eldest son of Horace Howard Furness and his wife Helen Kate (Rogers) Furness, married Helen Key Bullitt (who then became known as Helen Bullitt Furness), the daughter of John C. Bullitt and his wife Therese Langhorne Bullitt. Fairman Rogers Furness, the son of Walter Rogers Furness and Helen Bullitt Furness, also figures prominently in the collection.

The papers consist primarily of family correspondence between husbands and wives, siblings, parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, and cousins. The collection also contains a considerable amount of genealogical information about both the Furness and Bullitt families, as well as other related families. There is also a section of materials relating to the Seybert Commission on Spiritualism, appointed by the University of Pennsylvania to investigate spiritualism, of which Horace Howard Furness was a member. Finally, the collection includes an array of miscellaneous material such as newspaper clippings, photographs, and drawings, as well as school report cards and other family memorabilia.

Background note

Horace Howard Furness was born in 1833 to Reverend William Henry Furness, minister of the First Unitarian Church in Philadelphia and a leading abolitionist, and his wife Annis (Jenks) Furness. As a young man, he attended Harvard University, helping to pay his own way by tutoring other students and teaching in New York schools. Horace was an accomplished student and an active participant in campus life; he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the Hasty Pudding Club, and served as President of the Natural History Society.

After graduating from Harvard in 1854, Horace spent two years touring Europe, Asia and Africa with his college roommate, Atherton Blight. The years after his return to Philadelphia were active ones – he received his license to practice law in 1859, and was married to Helen Kate Rogers in 1860. When the Civil War broke out, Horace joined the Sanitary Commission, dedicated to the aid of wounded soldiers. He was instrumental in raising funds for the Commission in northern cities.

Precluded by deafness from practicing law after the war, Horace devoted his life to scholarly pursuits, and by 1880 was internationally respected as a Shakespearean scholar. He compiled sixteen volumes of criticism of Shakespeare's plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*. He was also elected a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania in 1880, and served in that capacity for twenty-three years.

Horace's work earned him many accolades. He received honorary degrees from Harvard, University of Halle in Germany, University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University and Cambridge University in England. He was also one of the earliest members elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Finally, in 1909, he was honored by the Pennsylvania Society of New York, which awarded him the first gold medal presented to a Pennsylvania citizen in recognition of distinguished achievement. He passed away in 1912 at the age of seventy-eight.

John Christian Bullitt, the other man most significantly represented in the Furness-Bullitt Papers, also lived a distinguished life, but came from quite a different background than Horace Howard Furness. Unlike Horace Furness, John Bullitt was not a native Philadelphian, having been born instead to a prominent Kentucky family in 1824. While Horace Furness' father was a leader of the abolitionist movement, John Bullitt grew up with slaves – his father, William C. Bullitt, owned more than 100. Moreover, while Horace was working for the Sanitary Commission, raising funds to aid wounded Union soldiers, several of John's brothers were fighting for the Confederacy. In fact, John's brother Joshua Bullitt was killed in battle in 1863. Finally, while Horace's family was prominent in religious circles, John's family was known for legal and political acumen. His grandfather, Alexander S. Bullitt, was President of Kentucky's first Constitutional Convention, and his father was a member of Kentucky's Constitutional Convention of 1850.

Upon graduating from Centre College in Kentucky, John moved to Philadelphia in 1849 and married Therese Langhorne in 1850. Upon arriving in Philadelphia, John soon became known as one of that city's leading attorneys, and his practice was among the most lucrative in the area. He and his partner Samuel Dickson reportedly earned more than \$100,000 a year. Much of his reputation for outstanding legal ability stemmed from his representation of the banking house Jay Cooke & Co. when its collapse triggered the Panic of 1873. Following in a family tradition, John also served as a delegate to the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1873. Perhaps the achievement for which John Bullitt was best known was his authorship the "Bullitt Bill" in 1885, which became

the Philadelphia City Charter in 1887, earning him the title “Father of Greater Philadelphia.” Upon his death in 1902, it was written of the bill:

The instrument is his. Its object was to improve the government of the city, to introduce business methods in the conduct of the several departments, and to bring about the greater efficiency as well as the curtailment of the police and fire service. It was wrought out by Mr. Bullitt as a labor of love, without fee or reward of any kind. That it has not been altogether successful in the object sought is due to errors of administration. The Bullitt act concentrates the power of municipal rule in the hands of the Mayor.

To memorialize his contributions to the city of Philadelphia, a statue of John Bullitt was erected on the plaza south of City Hall after his death.

Scope & content

The Horace Howard and Helen Kate Furness Papers are composed primarily of personal correspondence written by Horace Howard Furness and his wife Helen Kate Furness. The Horace Howard Furness Papers include letters Horace wrote to his parents and sister while a student at Harvard (1852-1854), to his parents and sister from his travels in Europe, Asia and Africa (1854-1856), to his wife while in the service of the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War (1862-1863), and finally, to his grandson Fairman Rogers Furness (1909-1912). While the first three groups of letters consist mainly of chronicles of daily events while Horace was at college, abroad, or traveling on Sanitary Commission business, the last is filled with advice, reflection, and the wisdom of a man nearing the end of a long and active life. In this way, the collection comes full circle, as Fairman Furness was a Harvard student, as Horace once was, at the time he received his grandfather's letters. Lastly, the collection includes a tablet on which Horace Furness recorded his emotions upon his wife's death in 1883. The papers of Helen Kate Furness consist almost entirely of letters she wrote to her cousin Carrie (Fairman) Warren and Carrie's husband James Warren. These letters mainly concern day-to-day household events and focus extensively on the raising of both couples' children.

The Walter Rogers and Helen Bullitt Furness Papers are also composed mainly of family correspondence. The correspondence of Walter Rogers Furness (the son of Horace Howard and Helen Kate Furness) consists of only three letters. The first two are letters Walter “wrote” to his cousin Fairman Warren as a young child (the letters appear to have been dictated by Walter and written by his mother Helen Kate Furness). The last is a letter Walter wrote to Helen Bullitt, his future wife. The papers of Helen Bullitt Furness (the daughter of John C. and Therese L. Bullitt) contain a variety of personal correspondence between Helen and various family members in addition to other individuals. There is no unifying theme among these papers, but many of the letters appear to be from family friends (including J. Willis Martin, a Philadelphia judge, and Samuel Dickson, one of John C. Bullitt's law partners) who were trying to help Walter

and Helen's son, Fairman Rogers Furness, obtain a diplomatic position with the United States government.

The Fairman Rogers Furness Papers are composed largely of correspondence Fairman penned during his years as Third Secretary to the United States Embassy at St. Petersburg, Russia (1912-1913). Most of the letters were written to his mother, Helen Bullitt Furness. The papers also contain letters between Fairman Furness and various other individuals during approximately the same time period, also relating to his diplomatic career. Finally, a handful of letters from the mid twentieth century centers on Fairman's interest in his family's genealogy.

The Mildred Bullitt Papers are similarly composed of family correspondence, and contain letters Mildred Bullitt wrote from her home in Kentucky to her son John Bullitt, his wife Therese, and their children in Philadelphia. The collection also includes several letters Mildred's grandchildren wrote to her. There is also a small amount of correspondence between Mildred Bullitt and another one of her children, Sue (Bullitt) Dixon.

The John Christian and Therese Langhorne Bullitt Papers are made up almost entirely of letters written by John Bullitt and his wife Therese. A large amount of the John Christian Bullitt Papers consist of a series of letters John wrote to his mother Mildred. These letters include observations on his professional accomplishments, his family, the state of the economy after the Panic of 1857, and the impending threat of civil war, among other matters. The collection also includes letters John wrote to his wife and children, and other correspondence between John and various family members, as well as a few other individuals. The papers also include the texts of several speeches given by John Bullitt and other miscellaneous papers such as newspaper clippings and invitations. The papers of Therese Langhorne Bullitt consist primarily of letters she wrote to her husband while she and the children were traveling in Europe without John in 1872-1873. Above all, these letters reflect how difficult and painful this separation was for Therese. The papers also include correspondence between Therese and other family members including her children, her parents, her mother in law Mildred Bullitt, and her sister in law Sue (Bullitt) Dixon. There is also one letter, written to Therese in 1849 (one year before she married John) and signed "Zorro" that appears to have been from a suitor.

The Therese Langhorne Bullitt Coles Papers are composed mainly of letters Therese wrote to her father John Bullitt during the family's aforementioned European travels in 1872-1873. The collection also contains several letters that she wrote to her younger sister Julia, her mother Therese, and her grandmother Mildred.

The Genealogy Papers consist of a wide variety of handwritten notes and family trees containing genealogical information about the Furness and Bullitt families, as well as several other related families including the Fairman, Rogers, Langhorne, Christian, Jenks, and Scott families, as well as several others.

The Seybert Commission Papers contain a variety of miscellaneous materials relating to Horace Furness' activities as a member of the Commission, which was appointed by the

University of Pennsylvania to investigate “spiritualism.” These materials include notes Horace took as part of his investigations, newspaper advertisements and business cards advertising mediums and other spiritualistic services, ledgers of expenses incurred in connection with such investigations, and correspondence from people interested in the Commission’s findings. The collection also includes a number of newspaper clippings relating to the arrests of false mediums in several U.S. cities during the years 1893-1895.

The Miscellaneous Furness-Bullitt Papers include correspondence among various members of the Furness and Bullitt families that are not prominently represented in the collection, correspondence among various other individuals, and miscellaneous family memorabilia such as report cards, invitations, drawings, and photographs.

Overview of arrangement

Series I	Horace Howard and Helen Kate Furness, 1849-1912	413 items
	a. Horace Howard Furness, c. 1850-1912	235 items
	b. Helen Kate Furness, 1849-1883	178 items
Series II	Walter Rogers and Helen Bullitt Furness, 1868-1914	21 items
	a. Walter Rogers Furness, 1868-1914	4 items
	b. Helen Bullitt Furness, 1876-1913	17 items
Series III	Fairman Rogers Furness, 1906-1966	125 items
Series IV	Mildred Bullitt, 1853-1879	36 items
Series V	John Christian and Therese Langhorne Bullitt, 1840-1902	121 items
	a. John Christian Bullitt, 1842-1902	74 items
	b. Therese Langhorne Bullitt, 1840-1881	47 items
Series VI	Therese Langhorne Bullitt Coles, 1865- 1880	94 items
Series VII	Genealogy, n.d.	62 items
Series VIII	Seybert Commission, 1885-1897	45 items
Series IX	Miscellaneous Furness-Bullitt, 1824-1967	142 items

Series description

Series 1. Horace Howard and Helen Kate Furness, 1849-1912 (Boxes 1-2)

a. Horace Howard Furness, c. 1850-1912

This subseries is mainly comprised of family correspondence. Included is a series of thirty-three letters Horace wrote to his parents and his sister Annis Lee Furness (later Annis Lee Wister) while attending Harvard between 1852 and 1854. In these letters, Horace’s dedication to scholarship, even at the expense of popularity, is readily apparent.

Although Horace was a serious student, his letters home reveal that he also had a sense of humor, as they frequently contained jokes, puns, and other humorous observations. Some of the letters relate Horace's interaction with famous figures of the time. For example, he mentions that Louis Agassiz, the famous naturalist and a founding member of the National Academy of Sciences, was his geology professor. Horace also relates going to hear Dr. Lyman Beecher (the father of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* author Harriet Beecher Stowe) preach and spending a day at the house of renowned writer and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson in Concord, Massachusetts.

Another series of fifty-seven letters, also written to his parents and sister, documents Horace's travels through Europe, Asia and Africa from 1854 to 1856. The letters, many of which were written over several days and span dozens of pages, serve as a painstakingly detailed journal of all Horace did and saw on his travels. On occasion, Horace described his feelings of awe at what, for him, was a new world. Upon arriving in England to begin his journey on October 24, 1854, he wrote:

I thought that getting to England as gradually as you necessarily must would very much deaden that feeling which one ought to feel in first stepping foot on English ground. But such was by no means my experience. It would be foolish to attempt to describe what I felt when I thought that this land which I tread on is English – the air is English – these black houses are English – everything is English; the feeling was indescribable.

Interestingly, after a year, Horace had seen enough of Europe to become, by his own admission, a bit jaded. On October 15, 1855, he wrote from Bonn:

It must be confessed that I have become so very blasé with regard to all kind of scenery, snow capped mountain, cloud capped mountain, wooded hill and undulating plain, that it takes something extraordinarily fine to make me open my eyes unusually wide or to express admiration.

Unsurprisingly, a visit to the pyramids of Egypt a few months later was more than enough to restore Horace's sense of awe and wonder. In an undated letter (written most likely in March of 1856) he exclaimed of the pyramids, "How everything else raised by human hands sinks into the humblest insignificance beside them! The stories of which they are composed fairly take away your breath by their colossal size."

Horace's observations often extended to the people he encountered as well as the places he visited. In a lengthy rant contained in the same letter quoted above, he revealed that, like many Americans of the time, he harbored strong anti-Semitic prejudice. A visit to Jerusalem moved him to write the following of the Jewish people: "They are lazy and licentious and serve to retain to this day all the characteristics of the Jews that clamored for the Crucifixion of Our Savior. They

look cruel and as though they hadn't a particle of human kindness in their compositions." It is difficult to know whether Horace Furness continued to adhere to these beliefs later in his life, as the collection includes no further writings on the subject beyond this series of letters.

Another interesting aspect of the letters Horace wrote on his foreign travels is the way in which they illustrate how servants were often treated in the nineteenth century. Later in the same letter quoted above, Horace described for his family how he handled a servants' rebellion by threatening them, and later beating one with a whip, which "made me laugh a few minutes after when I remembered how he jumped."

A constant thread that runs through all of the letters Horace wrote during his foreign travels is how much he loved and missed his family during his long absence from home. Typical of these letters is the following, written near the end of his journey on September 28, 1856: "[I]f [this letter] were reams and length and folio in size it couldn't express any better my love for you all and my yearning to see you."

The next major series of letters consists of those Horace wrote to his wife Helen Kate Furness (who typically went by her middle name) while he was working for the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War (1862-1863), first delivering food and medical supplies to wounded soldiers and later raising funds in various northern cities. These letters make clear that the long separation from his wife was agonizing for Horace. In one such letter, however, he explained to Kate his reasons for such a sacrifice: "I should despise myself as the meanest dastard if I allowed any personal considerations to influence my conduct. Could I ever look little Walter on the face when in the future years (which God vouchsafe to us!) he asks me about these times and what I did? It will be little enough, God knows, but ought I not to do what seems to lie so near my hand and is thus apparently thrust upon me?"

In addition to feeling compassion for the wounded soldiers he was aiding, Horace had inherited his father's strong abolitionist beliefs, and staunchly supported the Union cause. He noted on more than one occasion how differently he viewed the Confederate soldiers from those on his side:

It is very singular how different my emotions are on looking at the loyal and the rebel wounded. With the former when I look at a gaping wound in the arm or leg I involuntarily exclaim "That damned bullet!" but when I look at the latter I cannot for the life of me help thinking Ah! that was a good hit and came from a hero's gun. It is wholly apart from them as men that I look upon them; it is simply a question of honorable or dishonorable wounding.

Horace's feelings of anger toward the Confederacy were no doubt inflamed by the death of his close friend Wilder Dwight, who was killed while fighting for the Union. Horace learned of his friend's death on September 20, 1862, and related to Kate:

My ears and heart have just been stunned by hearing of dear Wilder Dwight's death. I am sick at heart. Here at the very threshold I want to turn back. I don't see how I can go on. This atmosphere is reeking with agony, the churches and the hotels are all full of fevered suffering men. What shall I do? I am so utterly feeble, it doesn't seem as though it were of the slightest avail to do anything.

Interestingly, Horace notes in the same letter that "Oliver Wendell Holmes passed through here today; his son [the future United States Supreme Court Justice of the same name] is badly wounded in the neck." The New York Times obituary of Justice Holmes, published on October 6, 1935, relates the story of his wounding at Antietam and his father's search for him, and indicates that this was the second of three times that Holmes was wounded in the conflict.

Also of interest is the fact that Horace twice encountered President Abraham Lincoln during his work with the Sanitary Commission. Both encounters left him disappointed with the President, however. The first occurred when Horace heard Lincoln give an impromptu speech on October 5, 1862, which he described to his wife, referring to Lincoln as "his most serene excellency," though he felt the speech was unremarkable. Soon afterward, on November 24, 1862, Horace escorted a group of female members of the Sanitary Commission to see President Lincoln at the White House. The visit left him unimpressed with Lincoln once again. In particular, he took issue with the President's leadership, and he described the ills Lincoln spoke of and remarked that the President was largely responsible.

As is mentioned above, the letters Horace wrote to his wife during his work for the Sanitary Commission are filled with expressions of his love for her, and make clear how painful the separation was for Horace. Unfortunately, on October 29, 1883, just twenty-three years after he married her, Helen Kate Furness passed away. A tablet on which Horace wrote an account of his beloved wife's death is one of the most poignant pieces of the collection. Immediately after Kate's death, Horace wrote, "I know in after years I shall look back to this moment, utterly wretched and heartbroken as I am, as one of the last happy moments of my life." A week later, he wrote:

One week ago tonight! Oh my darling, my darling. It is heavier now than ever. The waters have gone over my head, I am just heartbroken. I keep up before the children and the world but when bedtime comes and I am alone in my room – our room – my agony is greater than I can bear. Why can't I die. Dear God grant it, grant it. Give her to me or me to her. My life is utterly shattered. Deafen my ears and blind my eyes but only once more let me feel her – only touch the tip of her finger. Only one week ago! Millions of years cannot pass more slowly.

Years later, Horace sent this tablet to his grandson Fairman Rogers Furness with a cover note reading: "To FRF to read and burn. I've never been able to. HHF."

Clearly, Fairman Furness chose to retain the tablet rather than burn it as his grandfather wished.

Finally, the Horace Furness Papers include a series of letters Horace wrote to his grandson Fairman during the years 1909-1912, while the latter was a student at Harvard. Unlike his earlier letters, which served primarily as a journal of daily events, these letters contain Horace's reflections on life and reveal his attempts to pass on advice and wisdom to his grandson. In a letter written on November 28, 1909, Horace advised Fairman to be sure to earn the respect of his Harvard professors, and not to tarnish his family's name.

Another letter, written on December 5, 1909, is amusing in that it seems to follow an age-old pattern by which those of older generations remind their descendants of how fortunate they are to have not yet assumed the burdens of adulthood. In this letter, Horace advised Fairman to relish the lack of responsibility students were free to enjoy, remarking, "Here I am in my seventy seventh year and I've not had a day of real vacation, of freedom from all care, since I was graduated in 1854."

One cannot help but wonder, upon reading this letter, whether Horace recalled his foreign travels throughout Europe, Asia and Africa from 1854-1856 following his graduation from Harvard. Although, to be fair, Horace did work "in the development of [his] mind" even then, as he studied several foreign languages during his travels. The final letter in this subseries was written on January 14, 1912. In it, Horace expressed great disappointment at Fairman's decision to leave school early:

b. Helen Kate Furness, 1849-1883.

This subseries consists almost entirely of letters Kate wrote to her cousin Carrie (Fairman) Warren and Carrie's husband James Warren. The tone of the letters indicates that Kate and Carrie were extremely close. Most of the letters concern fairly routine daily household matters and gossip, but provide a great deal of insight into family matters and female friendship. Kate also mentioned Horace, who she spoke of in glowing terms, and how she was particularly proud of his work with the Sanitary Commission.

These papers contain Helen Furness' handwritten account of how she created a concordance (an alphabetical list of the important words used by a writer with references to the passages in which they appear) to Shakespeare's poems as a companion to her husband's work. A note accompanying the account, in Horace Furness' handwriting, reads "An Account of the exquisite method wherewith the Concordance to the Poems was made. (Preserve it for ever.)"

Series 2. Walter Rogers and Helen Bullitt Furness, 1868-1914 (Box 2)

a. Walter Rogers Furness, 1868-1914

Walter Rogers Furness's papers consist of two letters Walter "wrote" to his cousin Fairman Warren as a young child. Both letters appear to have been dictated by Walter, but actually written by his mother, Helen Kate Furness. The third and final letter in the subseries is one that Walter wrote to his future wife, Helen Key Bullitt,

the daughter of John Bullitt. The letter indicates that Walter was highly cognizant of the need to remain in his future father in law's good graces, as he told Helen, "I saw your respected Pa in the street the other day and he looked pretty chipper notwithstanding your absence. I fairly sweep up the street with my hat when I bowed to him for fear he put me on his black list."

b. Helen Bullitt Furness, 1868-1914

This series is dominated by personal correspondence between Helen and several family members, including her son Fairman Rogers Furness, her grandmother Mildred Bullitt, her cousin William Marshall Bullitt, and several other individuals who appear to have been family friends, such as Samuel Dickson (a law partner of Helen's father John Bullitt), Wayne McVeagh (another prominent Philadelphia attorney), and J. Willis Martin (a Philadelphia judge).

People to whom Helen had apparently turned for help in securing a diplomatic career for her son Fairman wrote many of the aforementioned letters. For example, on May 13, 1912, William Marshall Bullitt wrote to Helen that he would attempt to help Fairman get a job with the State Department, and that he would personally speak to President Taft, whom he knew, in doing so. Interestingly, William also wrote, "I wish some way could be found by which friendly relations could be established between [Fairman] and his grandfather." Fairman's maternal grandfather, John Bullitt, had been deceased since 1902, so the statement must refer to Fairman's paternal grandfather, Horace Howard Furness, who did not pass away until August 13, 1912, three months after this letter was written.

It is possible that a rift had developed between Fairman Furness and Horace Furness. The letters Horace wrote to Fairman that appear in the collection (which are not necessarily exhaustive) are dated between 1909-1910 (although some are undated) with the exception of one, written in January of 1912. This last letter, excerpted above, was highly critical of Fairman's decision to leave school early and expresses doubts as to his fitness for a diplomatic life. It certainly seems possible that this letter was reflective of a rift that had already developed, or was itself the cause of a rift. Unfortunately, the materials in the collection shed no further light on this subject.

Series 3. Fairman Rogers Furness, 1906-1966 (Box 2)

Fairman Rogers Furness's papers consist almost entirely of correspondence relating to Fairman's tenure as Third Secretary to the United States Embassy at St. Petersburg, Russia from 1912-1913. The bulk of this correspondence is comprised of letters and postcards Fairman wrote to his mother, Helen Bullitt Furness, from his training in Washington, D.C. and his embassy post in Russia. An interesting aspect of these letters is that they are addressed only to his mother, and make little or no mention of his father, Walter Rogers Furness, despite the fact that he did not die until 1914.

In a lengthy rant from St. Petersburg, eerily similar to that his grandfather Horace Furness wrote from Jerusalem over half a century earlier, Fairman revealed that he

too held strong anti-Semitic beliefs. While Horace Furness wished for a new Crusade against the Jews, Fairman similarly went so far as to profess his hope for the massacre of Jewish people. As he explained to his mother, Fairman's tirade was brought on by President Woodrow Wilson's refusal to enter into a treaty with Russia that would discriminate against American Jews and Fairman's belief that this would lead to the United States losing out to Germany for Russian trade: "If I ever hated the Jews before, it was with all my heart – now I hate them with every atom of my body...I shall be heartily glad when our manufacturers and our salespeople realize what a hideous blunder they've made in taking up the revenge for imaginary injuries of a handful of filthy Jews."

In addition to letters Fairman Furness wrote to his mother, the papers include several letters to Fairman from people he met while in Russia, some of which are written in Russian. There is also a small amount of correspondence between Fairman and the State Department relating to administrative matters such as reimbursement of expenses and a leave of absence Fairman requested due to his mother's illness, as well as correspondence from Curtis Guild, the U.S. Ambassador to Russia, concerning Fairman's appointment. Other interesting letters in the collection come from a Dr. Carasso, who in 1919 related to Fairman the story of his imprisonment in Russia after that country's revolution, and William Castle, who in 1914 wrote to Fairman to offer his reflections on World War I, including the observation, "Perhaps the commonest and best remark that one hears is this: 'I am absolutely neutral. I don't care in the least who beats Germany.' That seems to sum up the usual attitude of people in this part of the country." Finally, a few letters from the mid 1950s to the early 1960s, when Fairman was an elderly man, reflect his interest in his family's genealogy.

Series 4. Mildred Bullitt, 1853-1879 (Box 3)

Mildred Bullitt's papers are similarly composed of family correspondence, and contain letters Mildred Bullitt wrote from her home in Kentucky to her son John Bullitt, his wife Therese, and their children in Philadelphia. The collection also includes several letters Mildred's grandchildren wrote to her. There is also a small amount of correspondence between Mildred Bullitt and another one of her children, Sue (Bullitt) Dixon.

The frequent correspondence between Mildred Bullitt and her several grandchildren makes clear that they enjoyed a very close relationship, despite the significant distance between Mildred, who lived in Kentucky, and the children in Philadelphia. Mildred also appeared to have a very close relationship with her son John, who wrote to her often (as is discussed below in connection with the John Bullitt Papers). As is indicated by one letter Mildred wrote to her other two sons, Tom and James, she was concerned about John, a southerner, taking an active role in public life in a northern city during the Civil War. Nevertheless, she was extremely proud of John, stating that she felt "no mother ever had a better son than John; no country ever a truer patriot, no state ever a more loyal citizen than John." In the same letter, Mildred went on to discuss her general anxieties about the war, and to describe the atmosphere in Kentucky as the Confederacy prepared to do battle.

Series 5. John Christian and Therese Langhorne Bullitt, 1840-1902 (Box 3)

a. John Christian Bullitt, 1842-1902

This subseries consists primarily of family correspondence, a great deal of which is comprised of letters John wrote to his mother Mildred subsequent to his move from Kentucky to Philadelphia in 1849. One such letter, written on March 15, 1857, revealed John's sense of humor. In this letter, John expressed mock dismay that his friend Judge Black, the former Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, borrowed his pants when he went to Washington to assume the post of Attorney General.

In several letters written later that same year, John described to his mother the economic conditions created by the Panic of 1857, but noted that his family had been largely unaffected: Then, in 1861, John Bullitt wrote to his mother regarding the impending threat of Civil War, a topic that no doubt weighed heavily on the minds of most Americans of the time. Although John Bullitt was a native of the South and came from a vastly different background than Horace Furness, it is clear that both men shared a dislike for President Lincoln, as is made clear by John's letter of February 17, 1861: "We are to be cursed with a President weak enough to be led by those who surround him in any direction they see fit." Perhaps unsurprisingly, given his background, John Bullitt was opposed to President Lincoln's Republican administration and in favor of secession.

During the Civil War, John's brother, Joshua Fry Bullitt, a judge of the Court of Appeals of Kentucky, was arrested. During Joshua Bullitt's incarceration, John Bullitt learned that his brother was to be deported to the Tortuga Islands without a trial. This led to his securing an audience with President Lincoln to plead Joshua's case. His encounter with Lincoln, described in an August 19, 1864, letter to a relative, left John Bullitt angry and disillusioned with the President (much as Horace Howard Furness was). He left an in-depth account of his exchange with Lincoln, adding "neither you nor any one else can appreciate without experience the offensiveness of his manner."

John Bullitt's papers also contain several texts of what appear to be speeches, but it is not clear where and when these speeches were delivered, or if they were delivered at all (although John did write to his mother in December of 1875 to tell her that he had been asked to give a speech at a centennial banquet in Philadelphia). Two of the speeches, presumably written shortly before or during the Civil War, are particularly interesting, as they provide insight into John Bullitt's views on the most controversial question of the day – slavery. In stark contrast to the abolitionist views of Horace Furness, John Bullitt believed slavery to be a necessity, and did not believe that emancipation would ever be possible. In one speech, John Bullitt wrote of changes in the institution of slavery. Specifically, he noted that because slavery had grown so rapidly over the years, it had become more profitable, and had caused more people to rely on its benefits. In addition, he felt that the size of the institution lent itself more readily to the threat of rebellion and insurrection by the slaves.

In another speech (or possibly a different draft or a continuation of the speech quoted above), John Bullitt continued in the same vein, giving a detailed explanation for his conclusion that slavery could not be abolished and asserting that the northern states' dependence on slavery was equal to that of the southern states. He recommended a constitutional convention to address the slavery issue, concluding, "This article contains the means of obtaining the only remedy which appears to have any virtue. If this course does not afford a remedy then the union of these states must pass away and take its place in history as a relic of human greatness destroyed by madness and folly unsurpassed in the annals of nations."

Despite his views, which no doubt conflicted with those of most Philadelphians, John's career apparently suffered no harm. As is mentioned above, several years after the war he was asked to give a speech at a banquet held in Philadelphia to celebrate the nation's centennial. And, of course, he authored the "Bullitt Bill," which ultimately became the Philadelphia City Charter. In addition, all appearances are that his law practice continued to be lucrative. As he explained to his mother in 1875, "It is most satisfactory to know that I have lived down the war prejudices of the influential people here and that without in the slightest degree having ever wavered or catered in the least for their good will. "

b. Therese Langhorne Bullitt, 1840-1881

This subseries mostly contains correspondence between Therese L. Bullitt and various family members. The bulk of the papers are comprised of letters Therese wrote to her husband while she was traveling in Europe with the couple's children in 1872-1873. These letters are also the most interesting of the ones Therese wrote. It is clear that she went to Europe without John against her wishes, and did so only out of a sense of loyalty and obedience to her husband, who believed that such travels would be beneficial to his children's education. The letters indicate that Therese missed John terribly and was extremely lonely during this extended trip. Although she appears to have had a typical nineteenth century view of marital relations, specifically that a wife should obey her husband, Therese told John in no uncertain terms that if he attempted to impose another long separation upon her, she would strongly resist, which she made clear in many of her letters to him.

One of Therese's letters to John, written on July 12, 1873, makes reference to the fact that John's family apparently thought poorly of Therese, or at least Therese perceived this to be the case. The details surrounding this issue are unknown, as the letter in question is incomplete and the subject is not mentioned in any of the other correspondence in the collection. Therese wrote:

I have never been more grieved by anything that has happened during my life than I was to find what was thought of me by your family. Having no family of my own I took your family for my own and loved them all sincerely. It was a great pleasure for me to do anything for them and when I found out what was thought of me it did seem to me very . . . [rest of letter missing]

This letter is somewhat odd, because the collection contains correspondence between Therese and her mother-in-law Mildred Bullitt, all of which appears to be friendly.

Series 6. Therese Langhorne Bullitt Coles, 1865-1880 (Box 3)

This series is composed primarily of correspondence between Therese L.B. Coles and her mother Therese Bullitt, her father John Bullitt, her grandmother Mildred Bullitt, and her younger sister Julia Bullitt. One letter Therese wrote to her father in 1873 from Paris during the family's aforementioned European travels is particularly poignant, as it illustrates the degree of love and respect Therese felt for her father and her desire to please him: "This is the last letter that I will write to you, for I hope a very long time. Letters are but a poor substitute for speech, and separation from those we love is one of the hardest trials of life. And yet I shall be glad all my life of this separation, and this correspondence, which have made me understand what a father I really have."

Excerpts from other letters Therese wrote to her father from Europe illustrate her sometimes acerbic sense of humor:

James reads the Bible and the evening prayers for himself and Helen every night. Once he could not find the right place, so those two little things gravely prayed for "The Congress of the United States." I don't suppose there is any body of men who need it more.

The more I see of Europe the more thankful I am to my forefathers for crossing the sea.

The letters in the collection also indicate that Therese had a close relationship with her younger sister Julia and sometimes wrote to her in order to give her advice. A letter Therese wrote to Julia in 1877 while traveling with her husband in Japan, in which she advises her sister to avoid using slang expressions, is humorous when viewed in light of today's standards for speech:

[L]et me give you one piece of advice. If you wish to be truly swell, there is one word you must never use. You speak of Col. Harris' "pants." That is almost as bad as saying "gents," which I know you would not do. As you get a little older you should try to break yourself of using slang. It is excusable at sixteen, but it sounds very badly when a girl is quite grown up and would be dreadful in a married woman.

Series 7. Genealogy, n.d. (Box 4)

The Genealogy Papers consist of a wide variety of handwritten notes and family trees that appear to have been compiled by various members of the Furness and Bullitt families. The papers contain pure genealogical information as well as bits and pieces of family history. The information is far-reaching in both time and scope. In addition to the Furness and Bullitt families, the papers contain information on many

related families, including the Fairman, Rogers, Langhorne, Christian, Jenks and Scott families, as well as other more distantly related lines. The family trees also reach far into the past – in fact, some of the trees purport to trace the families’ lineage back to the eighth century.

Series 8. Seybert Commission, 1885-1897 (Box 4)

The Seybert Commission Papers contain a variety of miscellaneous materials relating to Horace Furness’ activities as a member of the Commission, which was appointed by the University of Pennsylvania to investigate “spiritualism.” These materials include notes Horace took as part of his investigations, newspaper advertisements and business cards advertising mediums and other spiritualistic services, ledgers of expenses incurred in connection with such investigations, and correspondence from people interested in the Commission’s findings. The collection also includes a number of newspaper clippings relating to the arrests of false mediums in several U.S. cities during the years 1893-1895.

Series 9. Miscellaneous Furness-Bullitt, 1824-1967 (Box 4)

The Miscellaneous Furness-Bullitt Papers include correspondence among various members of the Furness and Bullitt families that are not prominently represented in the collection, correspondence among various other individuals, and miscellaneous family memorabilia such as report cards, invitations, drawings, and photographs.

Separation report

None.

Related materials

Horace Howard Furness Papers (collection 224)
Helen Kate Rodgers Papers (collection Am 06862)

References

Therese Langhorne Bullitt Coles, *My Life: Written at the request of my daughter* (Philadelphia 1910)

Horace Howard Furness Jayne, *The Letters of Horace Howard Furness* (Cambridge 1922)

Gerard J. St. John, "This is *Our* Bar!: Workshop of the World 1852-1902," *The Philadelphia Lawyer*, vol. 64 (Philadelphia 2002)

Christine Moon Van Ness, *The Furness-Mitchell Coterie: Its Role in Philadelphia's Intellectual Life at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia 1985)

Talcott Williams, *Our Great Shakespeare Critic* (Cleveland 1912)

Subjects

Africa – Description and travel – To 1900
Antisemitism
Asia – Description and travel – To 1900
Bullitt family
Diplomatic and consular service, American – Russia
Domestic relations
Europe – Description and travel – To 1900
Family life -- Pennsylvania
Female friendship
Furness family
Married people – correspondence
Slavery – United States
Spiritualism
United States -- Civil War, 1861-1865
United States – Politics and government -- 1783-1865

Agassiz, Louis (1807-1873)
Bullitt, John Christian (1824-1902)
Bullitt, Julia (b. 1861)

Bullitt, Mildred (d. 1879)
Bullitt, Therese Langhorne (d. 1881)
Coles, Therese Langhorne Bullitt (1851-1922)
Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1803-1882)
Furness, Annis (Jenks) (1802-1885)
Furness, Fairman Rogers (1889-1971)
Furness, Helen Key Bullitt (1867-1914)
Furness, Helen Kate (Rogers) (d. 1883)
Furness, Horace Howard (1833-1912)
Furness, Walter Rogers (1861-1914)
Furness, William Henry (1802-1896)
Holmes, Oliver Wendell (1841-1935)
Lincoln, Abraham (1809-1865) – Political and social views
Shakespeare, William (1564-1616)
Warren, Caroline Augusta (Fairman)

United States Sanitary Commission
University of Pennsylvania. Seybert Commission for Investigating Modern Spiritualism

Administrative Information

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

The Furness Family Papers (Collection 1903) were initially acquired by HSP through the gift of Horace Howard Furness Jayne (the grandson of Horace Howard and Helen Kate Furness) in 1963. These papers consisted of the following:

1. The Helen Kate Furness outgoing correspondence;
2. Two letters dictated by Walter Rogers Furness to Fairman Warren and transcribed by Helen Kate Furness;
3. Correspondence from Horace Howard Furness to Helen Kate Furness while the former was traveling on Sanitary Commission business in 1862-1863;
4. One letter from Evans Rogers to Caroline Fairman dated 1852; and
5. The Seybert Commission Papers.

The remainder of this collection (accession 1995.0261) was acquired by HSP in 1995 from Wirt Thompson, Jr. (the grandson of Walter Rogers and Helen Bullitt Furness, and the great-grandson of Horace Howard and Helen Kate Furness and John Christian and Therese Langhorne Bullitt). These papers were added to the existing Furness Family Papers to form the Furness-Bullitt Family Papers.

Alternative format

None.

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Furness-Bullitt Papers (Collection 1903), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note

Formerly known as the Rogers Family Papers and the Furness Family Papers.

Much of the Helen Kate Furness correspondence was left undated by the author. On many of these letters, an unknown person has written a date in pencil, sometimes followed by a question mark. The letters were organized chronologically without regard to whether they were dated by Helen Kate Furness herself or this unknown individual. Researchers should therefore take note that the dates subsequently added to the letters may not be accurate.

Box and folder listing

Series 1. Horace Howard and Helen Kate Furness a. Horace Howard Furness

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Outgoing correspondence	c. 1850-1855	46 items	1	1
Outgoing correspondence	1855-1860	45 items	1	2
Outgoing correspondence	Sept – Nov. 1862	25 items	1	3
Outgoing correspondence	Nov. 1862	26 items	1	4
Outgoing correspondence	Dec. 1862	17 items	1	5
Outgoing correspondence	Jan. 1863	20 items	1	6
Outgoing correspondence	Feb. 1863	31 items	1	7
Outgoing correspondence	Mar. 1863	19 items	1	8
Outgoing correspondence	Mar. – July 1863	16 items	1	9
Outgoing correspondence	1909-1912, n.d.	27 items	1	10
Incoming correspondence	1868-1909	8 items	1	11
Writings on death of Helen Kate Furness	1883, n.d.	2 items	1	12
Miscellaneous	1854-1894	2 items	1	13

Series 1. Horace Howard and Helen Kate Furness b. Helen Kate Furness

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Outgoing correspondence	1849-1863	48 items	1	14
Outgoing correspondence	1863-1880	48 items	2	1
Outgoing correspondence	1880-1883, n.d.	49 items	2	2
Concordance materials	n.d.	3 items	2	3

Series 2. Walter Rogers and Helen Bullitt Furness a. Walter Rogers Furness

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Outgoing correspondence	1868-1886, n.d.	3 items	2	4
Newspaper clipping	1914	1 item	2	5

Series 2. Walter Rogers and Helen Bullitt Furness b. Helen Bullitt Furness

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Outgoing correspondence	1876-1912, n.d.	4 items	2	6
Incoming correspondence	1912-1913	13 items	2	7

Series 3. Fairman Rogers Furness

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Outgoing correspondence	1912	23 items	2	8
Outgoing correspondence	1912-1965, n.d.	29 items	2	9
Incoming correspondence	1906-1915	30 items	2	10
Incoming correspondence	1915-1966, n.d.	36 items	2	11
Related correspondence	1909-1960	5 items	2	12
Miscellaneous	1912, n.d.	2 items	2	13

Series 4. Mildred Bullitt

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Outgoing correspondence	1853-1879, n.d.	27 items	2	14
Incoming correspondence	1864-1879, n.d.	9 items	2	15

Series 5. John Christian and Therese Langhorne Bullitt a. John Christian Bullitt

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Outgoing correspondence	1851-1886, n.d.	27 items	2	16
Incoming correspondence	1873-1880, n.d.	14 items	2	17
Speeches	1842, n.d.	4 items	3	1
Newspaper clippings	1902, n.d.	14 items	3	2
Miscellaneous	1876-1880, n.d.	15 items	3	3

Series 5. John Christian and Therese Langhorne Bullitt b. Therese Langhorne Bullitt

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Outgoing correspondence	1871-1881, n.d.	31 items	3	4
Incoming correspondence	1840-1881, n.d.	16 items	3	5

Series 6. Therese Langhorne Bullitt Coles

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Outgoing correspondence	1865-1873	19 items	3	6
Outgoing correspondence	1873-1880	19 items	3	7
Outgoing correspondence	n.d.	27 items	3	8
Outgoing correspondence	n.d.	27 items	3	9
Incoming correspondence	n.d.	2 items	3	10

Series 7. Genealogy

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Family trees	n.d.	15 items	3	11
Notes and memoranda	n.d.	23 items	3	12
Notes and memoranda	n.d.	24 items	3	13

Series 8. Seybert Commission

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Correspondence	1885-1897, n.d.	10 items	3	14
Newspaper clippings	1893-1895, n.d.	16 items	3	15
Miscellaneous	n.d.	19 items	3	16

Series 9. Miscellaneous

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Correspondence	1842-1962, n.d.	24 items	4	1
Envelopes	1880-1954, n.d.	16 items	4	2

Invitations	1844-1869	3 items	4	3
Report cards and schoolwork	1824-1880, n.d.	16 items	4	4
Inventories and ledgers	n.d.	5 items	4	5
Newspaper clippings	1893-1967, n.d.	5 items	4	6
Paintings	n.d.	2 items	4	7
Miscellaneous	1947-1965, n.d.	13 items	4	8
Photographs	1866-1910, n.d.	58 items	4	9
Tintypes and glass negative	1866, n.d.	3 items	5	n/a