

# Guide to the Wetmore Family Papers

MS 548



compiled by John Espy

February 1980

Yale University Library  
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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 548

**CREATOR:** Wetmore family

**TITLE:** Wetmore family papers

**DATES:** 1638-1921

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 5.5 linear feet (12 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The papers consist of materials relating to George Peabody Wetmore and his family. Correspondence and other papers document the lives of several of Wetmore's ancestors and reflect his interest in New England history. The papers also include letter books and account books of the mercantile firms of Prosper Wetmore & Brothers and Joseph and Joshua Grafton.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0548>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0548>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Wetmore Family Papers were given to Yale University Library by Edith and Maude Wetmore between 1942 and 1947.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

Copyright status for collection materials is unknown, though much of the material in this collection is likely in the public domain. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

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## Preferred Citation

Wetmore Family Papers (MS 548). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Related Materials

Some papers of the Rev. Izrahiah Wetmore II are in the Yale Divinity Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

GEORGE PEABODY WETMORE, 1846-1921

George Peabody Wetmore, son of William Shepard and Anstiss Derby (Rogers) Wetmore, was born August 2, 1846, in London, England, during a visit of his parents abroad. William Shepard Wetmore, who was a merchant in the China trade, established mercantile houses in China, South America, and New York City. His father, Seth Wetmore, was a judge, a member of the Vermont Legislature and of the Governor's Council, and a Fellow of the University of Vermont. The latter married Nancy Shepard, a daughter of General William Shepard of the Continental Army. The founder of the American branch of the Wetmore family was Thomas Whitmore, who came from England to Boston, Mass., in 1635, and removed to Wethersfield, Conn., about 1640. Several of George Peabody Wetmore's paternal ancestors were among the original patentees of Middletown, Conn. His mother's ancestors lived in Massachusetts. She was a descendant of the Rogers, Dudley Derby, Crowninshield, Pickman, and other well-known families.

Mr. Wetmore received his early education at the private schools of Messrs. Reed and Thurston and of the Rev. William C. Leverett in Newport, R. I. At Yale he was a member of Linonia.

After graduation he studied for two years at the Columbia Law School. He received the degree of LL.B. in 1869, and was admitted to the bars of Rhode Island and New York the same year. He had always taken an active interest in politics and in 1880, and again in 1884, was a presidential elector. He was elected governor of Rhode Island in 1885 and served two terms, but was defeated for a third term. He was a member of the commission that built the new Rhode Island State House at Providence. In 1894 he was elected as a Republican to the United States Senate, receiving the unanimous vote of the General Assembly in Senate, House, and joint convention. He was twice reelected to the Senate, his last term ending March 4, 1913. In the Senate Mr. Wetmore was, first, chairman of the Committee on Manufactures, and then chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library for sixteen years. He was also a member of the Appropriations, District of Columbia, Naval Affairs, Public Buildings and Grounds, and other committees. He had a deep interest in the building up of the Navy and the development of the naval base in Narragansett Bay. He served as chairman of the joint commission appointed by Congress to prepare plans for the completion of the Capitol building in Washington; was chairman of the first Lincoln Memorial Commission and a member of the commission that erected the National Lincoln Memorial in Washington; and was a member of the Grant Memorial Commission, as well as many others for the erection of statues and memorials. He was greatly interested in

the improvement and development of Washington and the District of Columbia on a definite artistic plan, and was particularly identified with the legislation creating the National Commission of Fine Arts.

In private life Mr. Wetmore was for many years associated with various organizations for promoting the fine arts. He was one of the organizers of the Metropolitan Opera in New York and a member of the committee in charge of the construction of the Metropolitan Opera House. He was a trustee of the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale and of the Peabody Education Fund. In 1888 he was nominated as a Fellow of the University, but declined to have his name considered. He was one of the founders of the Jockey Club, vice-president of the National Horse Show Association of America, and a director of other organizations for improving the breeding of horses. At his home in Newport he was a trustee of the Redwood Library and Athenyæum, president and a trustee of the Newport Hospital, and president of the Newport Reading Room and the Newport Casino. He was a member of the Society of the Cincinnati.

He was married December 22, 1869, in New York City, to Edith Malvina Keteltas. Her father, Eugene Keteltas, was a member of the Class of 1822, Yale College, but left before graduation, and was graduated at Union College in 1822. Yale gave him the honorary degree of M.A. in 1870. Mrs. Wetmore's grandfather, Philip Doddridge Keteltas, was Yale 1792; her great-grandfather, Rev. Abraham Keteltas, graduated at Yale in 1752 and was admitted to the M.A. degree at Yale and Princeton in 1755; and her great-great-grandfather, William Smith, was Yale 1719. Mr. and Mrs. Wetmore had four children: Edith Malvina Keteltas; Maude Alice Keteltas; William Shepard Keteltas (B.A. 1897); and Rogers Pickman Derby Keteltas.

Mr. Wetmore died September 11, 1921, in Boston, Mass. The funeral services were held in Trinity Church, Newport, and the interment was in the Island Cemetery. He is survived by his wife and daughters and one son. His son, Rogers P. D. K. Wetmore, died April 26, 1917.

*Yale College Obituary Record, 1920-1925 pp. 350-352.*

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## Scope and Contents

The collection consists of the papers of George Peabody Wetmore (1846-1921), governor of Rhode Island, 1885-1887, U.S. Senator, 1895-1913, and other papers collected by him. These papers, going back to the 17th century, reflect Wetmore's interest in New England history. Special emphasis is given to Rhode Island (especially Newport) and Massachusetts (especially Boston and Salem), and to the family names Dudley and Derby (to whom Wetmore was related through his mother), Wetmore, and Keteltas (to whom Wetmore was related through his wife). Some papers related to the Aaron Burr family have been transferred to the Burr Family Papers. The collection also contains some papers of General William Shepard (1737-1817; his daughter Nancy was Wetmore's paternal grandmother), who commanded the force which quelled Shays' Rebellion in 1787. (See the genealogical tables for the Wetmores and also for the Graftons, whose business correspondence forms a separate unit at the end of the collection.)

Wetmore's personal papers contain letters from many important Washington figures including Presidents Roosevelt and Taft. Among the most heavily represented of these correspondents are Elihu Root and John Hay. The letters are individually catalogued in the department manuscript catalog on microfiche.

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## Arrangement

The papers are arranged by format.

## Collection Contents

b. 1	Biographical data for some correspondents, with auction notices for some of the items purchased by GPW (other auction notices are filed with the items themselves)	
b. 1	Autographs of some correspondents	
	Correspondence, legal and business papers	
b. 1	1638 (an 1821 copy), 1659-1802 See also: <a href="#">box 8</a>	1638 (an 1821 copy), 1659-1802
b. 2	1803-1912 See also: <a href="#">box 8</a>	1803-1912
b. 3	1913-1919, undated and miscellaneous	
b. 3	Correspondence and notes of GPW re: collecting books (especially editions of William Smith's <i>History of New York</i> ) and portraits	1913-1918
	Diaries and journals	
b. 3	Thomas Paine (1694-1757): annotated copy of Edward Holyoke's <i>Almanack of 1715 the Celestial Motions, Aspects and Eclipses</i>	
b. 3	Richard Derby (1736-1781): diary	mostly 1775 January- December
	William Fisk (d. 1803)	
b. 3	Itinerary	1776 December 16-1777 January 21
b. 3	Accounts	1777
b. 3	Diary, "Copy from Joseph Bates Book"	1777 August 23- October 18
b. 3	Diary, "Copy of a memorandum kept by Elias Richards"	1777 May 25-1779 January 18
b. 3	John Francis (1763-1796), attributed author (see catalog card): "Journal of our Journey to Connecticut and Massachusetts to collect Debts"	1789 February 7-12
b. 3	Joseph Bowditch, Jr.: diary	1797 January- December
	William Wetmore (1749-1830): memorandum book and diary kept in interleaved copies of various almanacs, and bound in 6 volumes	
b. 4	Vol. 1	1771-1779
b. 9	Vol. 2	1799-1803

## William Wetmore (1749-1830): memorandum book and diary kept in i [...] (continued)

b. 10	Vol. 3	1804-1809
b. 11	Vol. 4	1810-1816
b. 12	Vol. 5	1817-1823
b. 5	Vol. 6	1824-1829
Notebooks and memorabilia		
b. 5	Notes in Latin and Dutch on the Old Testament prophetic books, bound with fragments of a printed textbook in Latin  Material marked "Abraham Keteltas, 1780" (Keteltas, 1732-1798, Yale 1752, was the great-grandfather of GPW's wife Edith); presumably belonged to one of his Dutch ancestors.	Undated
b. 5	GPW: notes taken at Columbia College Law School, probably on the lectures of Theodore William Dwight (1822-1892)	Circa 1869
b. 5	Tribute from the Trustees of the Newport Hospital to GPW	1921 September 13
b. 6	Account books and business letterbooks	
b. 6	Prosper Wetmore & Brothers: ledger and journal of mercantile transactions	1794-1799
Joseph and Joshua Grafton, merchants of Salem, Massachusetts, and Havana, Cuba: 11 letterbooks, one bound, some numbered		
b. 7	#1 English	1781 November-1782 June
b. 7	#2 English	1782 January-July
b. 7	(bound) English	1782 March-1784 December
b. 7	# 5 English	1782 October-1783 February
b. 7	# 6 English	1783 February-June
b. 7	# 7 English	1783 March-November
b. 7	# 8 English	1783 June-1784 March
b. 7	# 9 English	1783 November-1784 January
b. 7	#11 English	1784 April-June

Joseph and Joshua Grafton, merchants of Salem, Massachusetts, an [...] (continued)

b. 7	1785 January-May	1785 January-May
b. 7	1786 January-May	1786 January-May
Folio		
f. 8	Correspondence, legal and business papers See also: <a href="#">box 1</a> See also: <a href="#">box 2</a>	1685-1847
f. 8	Autographed photograph of William H. Taft	1909 May 8
f. 8	Wetmore family genealogy	1859



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## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### Subjects

Armed Forces  
Business  
Families  
Law  
Lawyers  
Merchants

### Families

Whitmore family

### Corporate Body

Prosper Wetmore & Brothers

### Geographic Names

Massachusetts -- Commerce  
Massachusetts -- History  
New England  
Rhode Island -- History  
Rhode Island -- Politics and government --  
1865-1950  
United States -- History -- Colonial period, ca.  
1600-1775  
United States -- History -- Revolution,  
1775-1783  
United States -- Politics and government --  
1865-1900  
United States -- Politics and government --  
1901-1953

### Genres / Formats

Account books  
Diaries

### Occupations

Legislators  
Politicians

### Names

Grafton, Joseph, 1755-1794  
Grafton, Joshua, 1757-1787  
Hay, John, 1769-1843  
Root, Elihu, 1845-1937  
Shepherd, William, 1737-1817  
Wetmore, George Peabody, 1846-1921  
Wetmore, Prosper, 1767-1817  
Wetmore, William, 1749-1830