

Guide to the Elias Loomis Family Papers

MS 331



compiled by Diane E. Kaplan

September 1985

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
Yale University Library
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CALL NUMBER: MS 331

CREATOR: Loomis, Elias, 1811-1889

TITLE: Elias Loomis family papers

DATES: 1727-1947

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 14 linear feet (30 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers consist of personal and professional correspondence, genealogical and professional research material and writings, and financial records of Elias Loomis and his sons Henry Bradford and Francis Engelsby Loomis. The papers record Elias Loomis' scientific studies, particularly in astronomy and meteorology. Genealogical notes and writings document the family history through the descendants of Joseph Loomis. Correspondence concerning Elias Loomis' father, sisters, and brothers, who were pioneer settlers of Alton, Illinois, details the family's interest in developments in American politics, education, travel, and social conditions from the 1830s through the 1870s.

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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.0331>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to 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

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Mrs. Henry B. Loomis and her estate between 1940-1949. Purchase from Halvor Americana, 1994.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Elias Loomis Family Papers (MS 331). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Existence and Location of Copies

Astronomical and meteorological scrapbooks are available on microfilm (340 frames on 1 reel, 35mm.) from Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, at cost. Order no. HM97.

Associated Materials

Related material: Elias Loomis Papers, (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.)

Biographical / Historical

Elias Loomis was an astronomer, meteorologist, teacher, and author of scientific and mathematical texts. He taught at Western Reserve College, New York University, and Yale University. Loomis was also a genealogist and produced a massive compendium of information on the Joseph Loomis family.

Scope and Contents

The Elias Loomis Family Papers consist of personal and professional papers of Elias Loomis and his sons Henry Bradford and Francis Engelsby Loomis. The papers record Elias Loomis' scientific studies, particularly in the fields of astronomy and meteorology, and his genealogical research on the American descendants of Joseph Loomis. Elias Loomis' correspondence with his father, sisters, and brothers, pioneer settlers of Alton, Illinois, forms an especially rich chronicle of Loomis family life as individuals trace developments in American settlement, politics, education, travel, and social conditions from the 1830s - 1870s.

The papers are arranged in two series: I. Elias Loomis Papers and II. Henry B. Loomis Papers.

Series I consists of Elias Loomis' family correspondence, scientific papers, investment records, genealogical papers, and memorabilia. Series II consists of Henry Bradford Loomis' papers and is composed of financial records, personal and travel memorabilia, and research notes. The papers of Francis Engelsby Loomis, which were retained by Henry B. Loomis as executor of his brother's estate, are also arranged in Series II. Series I is the larger of the two series and is arranged in five sections: *Family Correspondence*, *Personal and Family Memorabilia*, *Professional Papers*, *Investment Papers*, and *Genealogical Papers*.

Family Correspondence consists primarily of letters addressed to Elias Loomis from 1827-1889. Family members who are frequent correspondents include Loomis' father Hubbel Loomis, sisters Jerusha Bradford, Sophia Edwards, and Caroline Newman, brothers David Burt (Burt) and John Calvin (Calvin), relations of Loomis' wife Julia Upson from Tallmadge, Ohio, and sons Francis Engelsby Loomis and Henry Bradford Loomis. The letters are arranged in chronological order. The letters detail many phases of family life. The many writers appear well-educated and politically aware. Women correspondents describe their positions as spinsters, wives, and widows.

The letters commence in 1827 with news of Loomis' family in Willington, Connecticut and of sisters Jerusha and Sophia at school in Plainfield, Connecticut. At the time Elias Loomis was attending school in New Haven. In 1828 Loomis' father, a Congregational minister, advocated the practice of full immersion baptism, but found that his religious views were unacceptable to the people of his congregation. After the death of Loomis' mother in 1829, the family began a series of moves in search of economic security and religious tolerance. Leaving Elias Loomis at Yale and Jerusha in the care of her husband's family, Hubbel Loomis announced his intention to move west in 1830. In the spring he and Sophia, Caroline, Burt, and Calvin made the arduous journey from Connecticut to Illinois. Letters from the period describe the trip by boat and coach. The family settled first in Rock Springs, then in Kaskaskia, and finally, in 1831, in Alton, Illinois, twenty miles up the Mississippi River from St. Louis. The letters describe the difficult journey, local settlers, meetings with French traders and Indians, and the occupation of Hubbel and Sophia in teaching duties. Clippings about early life in Alton are included in Elias Loomis' scrapbooks, which are available on microfilm (HM 97).

In 1832 Jerusha joined the family in Illinois, well after her husband left her to seek his fortune in the South or in South America. Jerusha supported herself by teaching and writes Elias Loomis with news of her financial progress. She also suffered from cataracts and relates her treatments by electricity and galvanism.

In 1833 Hubbel Loomis returned East to collect funds for the development of a college (to become Shurtliff College) in Alton. To the surprise and dismay of his children he returned with a new wife. The sisters write Elias, now a tutor in Yale College, of their fear that Hubbel will have more children and destroy the family's financial prospects. Caroline acknowledges the need to educate herself to become a teacher in order to be self-supporting.

In 1834 Jerusha embarked on a trip to meet her husband James now settled in Georgia. Her letters describe primitive living conditions in the South. After a year, however, she invites family members to Georgia. This invitation is accepted by Caroline and Sophia, and in 1835 there are more letters describing the conditions for cross-country travellers.

Jerusha quickly accepted slavery as the custom of her new home. The issue of slavery does not lead to any break in correspondence, although Northern family members held divergent views on the subject. As early as 1833 Hubbel Loomis writes of the condition of blacks in Illinois, and Jerusha, in inviting Elias Loomis to visit, warns that those who voice abolitionist sentiments are subject to the Lynch Law. The Illinois family, situated so close to St. Louis, reports on the 1836 attacks on Elijah Lovejoy's printing press. Letters written in 1837 recount the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society meeting in Alton and the subsequent mob violence. Burt writes only a few details on his part in defending Lovejoy's Alton press on the night the mob murdered Lovejoy.

Elias Loomis developed a commanding knowledge of astronomy while a tutor at Yale. Following his rediscovery of Halley's comet in 1835, his sisters write of their own attempts to make astronomical observations. In 1836 Loomis was named a professor at Western Reserve College in Hudson, Ohio, and he left for Europe to purchase astronomical equipment for the college. He writes family members

describing his European travels. He also wrote a column for the *Ohio Observer*; copies of the column are in the second scrapbook, also available on microfilm (HM 97).

The papers trace the maturing of Hubbel Loomis' family. On Elias Loomis' return from Europe in 1837, Calvin, the youngest brother, is sent to attend Western Reserve. Sophia marries Cyrus Edwards, a member of a politically prominent Illinois family. Jerusha and James move to Alabama in 1838. Letters from the 1840s record the marriages of Elias to Julia Upson and Caroline to Zenas Newman and the births of numerous grandchildren for Hubbel Loomis.

There are financial hard times, the family advocates Whig political policies, phrenology and animal magnetism are popular fads, and the Mormons and Millerites pass through Illinois. These topics are all observed in the letters. Family members move in pursuit of livelihood: Elias to New York in 1844, Burt to the falls of the St. Croix (now Stillwater, Minnesota) in the same year; and Calvin to the South in order to teach. Caroline, shortly after the death of her husband in 1844, follows Jerusha's suggestion and moves to Alabama to sustain herself through teaching. Jerusha and James are constantly shifting from town to town in search of a well-paying school. Letters also note "gold fever" striking and Ohio wagon shops and carriage factories making California wagons. Burt's somewhat infrequent letters tell of his employ in the logging industry and his career in Minnesota territorial politics.

In 1851 a family reunion is planned. Jerusha dies in 1852. Elias' wife Julia, in failing health, returns to Ohio to have a second baby. Ohio family members write to tell of her health. She died in 1854 leaving the children in the care of the Ohio family. The letters of the 1850s also illustrate the change in travel brought about with the coming of the railroads. Caroline and Burt contemplate visiting the World's Fair in New York. Family members go off to California, and remaining Illinois family members see no reason for Elias not to visit them more frequently than every ten years.

Calvin, by 1856, is acclimated to Southern ways and admits that in case the union dissolves he will go with the South. He writes of his marriage into a Southern family and his activities in the Alabama Educational Association. Caroline, who has returned to Illinois, fears that her brothers will have to meet on the field of battle. With the coming of the Civil War Burt, Caroline's son James, and Sophia's son Wurt join the Union Army. Burt's letters tell of the battles he has seen in Kentucky and Tennessee, and Caroline sends details of army life gleaned from other letters. Sophia and Caroline discuss the tenor of public opinion as the war progresses. Caroline hears that Calvin continues to teach school in the South.

After the war Calvin writes of the financial distress in the South. Calvin assumes a position at the University of Alabama in 1869, but writes of his troubles with the board of regents, whom he describes as carpetbaggers and scalawags. Other family members move to Minnesota, and they supply descriptive letters. Caroline and Hubbel still write frequently of the college and town. Shurtliff College has admitted black students, and Caroline fears few white students will remain. By 1871 the college has also admitted women.

Beginning in 1866 the papers contain letters from Francis E. Loomis, Elias' oldest son. Francis received Ph.D.s from Yale and the University of Göttingen. Following his return from Europe, he taught for a year at Cornell University, but fell victim to chronic respiratory illness. In 1872 he retired to Europe to relax and regain his health. His letters depict the life of an invalid traveling from hotel to hotel in search of temperate climate and a congenial atmosphere. He maintained this regime until his death in 1918.

In 1872 Hubbel Loomis died at the age of ninety-seven. A lengthy memoir of his life, in the form of a letter to his son, is arranged in folder sixty-four. It offers a personal history of Shurtliff College and details Hubbel's religious views. Correspondence from the 1870s until Elias' death in 1889 is much less frequent Burt writing but seldom; Calvin writing infrequently concerning his journalistic endeavors in Georgia; Sophia relating only details of her children and grandchildren; Caroline writing with a sharp, but sometimes bitter wit of her life in old age; and younger son Henry writing of his legal career in San Francisco, California and Seattle, Washington.

The family correspondence is followed by two boxes of *Personal and Family Memorabilia*. The boxes include travel journals from Elias' trips to Europe, papers of early family members dating from 1727, portraits and photographs of Elias and other family members, and obituaries and memorial tributes.

Professional Papers consists mainly of Elias Loomis' notebooks of scientific observations, meteorological maps and charts, and drafts for his *Contributions to Meteorology*. There are also gradebooks from twenty-five years of teaching at Yale and a small quantity of professional correspondence. Among the numerous astronomical observations is a notebook containing the calculations on the return of Halley's comet (folder 89). Additional professional notes and writings including Elias' columns on meteorology are found in the scrapbooks on FILM HM 97. Most of Elias' professional correspondence is contained in twelve bound volumes housed in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.

Elias Loomis derived a comfortable living from the sale of textbooks in mathematics, astronomy, and meteorology. Correspondence and other papers filed under *Investment Papers* relate to the accumulation and disposal of his wealth. Correspondence with Harper & Brothers mainly concerns royalties, but other correspondents in the section are investment companies dealing in western land speculation, railroad stocks, and mortgage loans in cities such as St. Louis, Chicago, and Minneapolis.

The last section in Series I, *Genealogical Papers*, consists of Loomis' research material and writings on the genealogy of the Loomis family. Loomis corresponded widely in his efforts to trace the over 20,000 names for his published genealogical works. The section includes four boxes of genealogical correspondence arranged in rough chronological order. The section also includes Loomis' notes, requests for subscribers, and a printed copy of his final published genealogical work.

Series II is composed of eight boxes of Henry Bradford Loomis' personal and investment papers. These papers, along with the papers in Series I, were donated to the Yale University Library by his widow, Isabel Grace Loomis, and her estate from 1940-1949. The largest quantity of papers in Series II documents Henry's investment activities in Seattle real estate (boxes 26-28). The series also includes personal correspondence with his brother Francis in Europe. Some of this correspondence concerns Elias Loomis' estate and a large donation left to Yale University by the terms of his will. A few items document Henry Loomis' interest in conservation including a journal and memorabilia from a trip to Alaska with John Muir. There is other travel memorabilia from visits to Europe and Egypt; correspondence and memorabilia concerning Hopkins Grammar School, Western Reserve College, Yale University, and Harvard Law School; and an extensive record of his role as executor of Francis E. Loomis' estate.

Arrangement

Arranged in two series: I. Elias Loomis Papers. II. Henry B. Loomis Papers.

Collection Contents

Series I: Elias Loomis Papers, 1727-1898

8.75' (21 boxes)

The series is arranged in five sections: Family Correspondence, Personal and Family Memorabilia, Professional Papers, Investment Papers, and Genealogical Papers.

Family Correspondence

b. 1, f. 1-16	1827-1842	1827-1842
b. 2, f. 17-28	1843-1854 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1843-1854
b. 3, f. 29-46	1855-1872 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1855-1872
b. 4, f. 47-62	1873-1889	1873-1889
b. 4, f. 63	undated	undated
b. 4, f. 64	Memoirs of Hubbell Loomis	Undated

Personal and Family Memorabilia

b. 5, f. 65	Andover Seminary: notebook	1831-1832
	Certificates, diplomas, passports, 1836-1880	
b. 5, f. 66	Commonplace book	undated
b. 5, f. 67-70	Legal and financial papers See also: box 14, folder 143	1840-1889
b. 6, f. 71	Notebooks	undated
b. 6, f. 72-73	Travel journals	1836-1837, 1855-1880
b. 6, f. 74	Obituary notices, estate papers	1889-1898
b. 6, f. 75	Other family papers	1727-1835
b. 6, f. 76	Miscellanea	1817-1889
b. 6, f. 77	Portraits: engraving plates	undated
b. 6, f. 78-82	Photographs	undated

Professional Papers

Professional Papers (continued)

b. 7, f. 83-88	Professional correspondence	1848-1889, undated
b. 7, f. 89-91	Scientific observations -- notebooks	1834-1888
	Astronomical observations	
b. 8, f. 92-95	Notebooks	1835-1884
b. 8, f. 96	Notes	undated
	Astronomy	
b. 8, f. 97	Lecture notebook	undated
b. 8, f. 98	Aurora Borealis -- notes	undated
b. 9, f. 99-101	Aurora Borealis -- notes	undated
	<u>Contributions to Meteorology</u>	
b. 9, f. 102	Draft of chapter 1	undated
b. 9, f. 103	Draft of chapter 2	undated
b. 9, f. 104	Chapter 3	undated
b. 9, f. 105	Miscellaneous	undated
b. 9, f. 106-107	Charts	undated
b. 9, f. 108	Dolland's variation on transit -- notebooks	1834-1838
b. 10, f. 109-110	Gradebooks	1861-1886
b. 10, f. 111-114	Magnetic observations -- notebooks	1839-1859
b. 10, f. 115	Mathematics -- algebra, trigonometry, and geometry problems, calculations, and notes	undated
b. 10, f. 116	Mechanics and architecture -- notes	undated
b. 10, f. 117	Meteorological observations, maps and charts	undated
b. 10, f. 118	Meteorological charts and graphs -- selection	undated
b. 11, f. 119-122	Meteorological maps	undated
b. 11, f. 123	Meteorological notes and writings	undated
b. 11, f. 124-125	Meteorological observations -- notes	1838-1849
b. 12, f. 126-134	Meteorological observations -- notes	1854-1889
b. 13, f. 135-139	Meteorological observations -- notes	1877-1885, undated
b. 13, f. 140	Meteorology -- textbook with notes	[ca. 1855]
b. 13, f. 141	Natural philosophy -- notebook	undated

Professional Papers (continued)

b. 14, f. 142	Natural philosophy -- notebook	undated
<u>Investment Papers</u>		
b. 14, f. 143	Ames, E.B.	1884-1889
b. 14, f. 144-152	Baird & Bradley	1874-1889
b. 15, f. 153	Baird & Bradley	1882
b. 15, f. 154	Bien (Julius) & Co.	1886, 1889
b. 15, f. 155	Brown Brothers & Co.	1857-1866, 1874-1888
b. 15, f. 156	Budd, Son & Co.	1874-1875
b. 15, f. 157-163	Budd & Wade	1876-1884
b. 15, f. 164-165	Burnham, Trevitt & Mattis	1885-1889
b. 15, f. 166	Harper & Brothers	1881-1889
b. 16, f. 167-169	Harper & Brothers	1848-1889
b. 16, f. 170-171	Hatch (W.T.) & Sons	1874-1887
b. 16, f. 172	Lewis Investment Co.	1886-1889
b. 16, f. 173	Pratt & Cone	1888-1889
b. 16, f. 174-176	Rowse, E.S.	1883-1889
b. 17, f. 177	Miscellaneous investment papers	1874-1889
b. 17, f. 178-180	Bills and receipts	1860-1874
<u>Genealogical Papers</u>		
b. 17, f. 181-191	Correspondence	1834-1871
b. 18, f. 192-208	Correspondence	1872-1877
b. 19, f. 209-225	Correspondence	1877-1881
b. 20, f. 226-239	Correspondence	1881-1889, undated
b. 20, f. 240-242	Genealogy notes	undated
b. 21, f. 243-245	Genealogy notes	undated
b. 21, f. 246	Genealogy subscribers	undated
b. 21, f. 247	<i>Descendants [by the Female Branches] of Joseph Loomis</i> by Elias Loomis English	1880

Series II: Henry B. Loomis Papers, 1863-1947

3.25' (8 boxes)

The series is arranged in alphabetical order by topic.

b. 22, f. 248	Address book	[ca. 1890-1930]
b. 22, f. 249	Alaskan travel memorabilia	1890
b. 22, f. 250	Ancient history	undated
b. 22, f. 251	Astronomy	undated
b. 22, f. 252-253	Bank accounts	1890-1924
b. 22, f. 254	Book lists	[ca. 1897-1934]
	Certificates, 1869, 1922 See: Folio box	
b. 22, f. 255	Clippings	[ca. 1895-1943]
b. 22, f. 256-257	Correspondence, personal	1877-1933, undated
b. 22, f. 258	Diaries	[ca. 1880-1940]
b. 23, f. 259	Harvard	1878-1938
b. 23, f. 260	Holt family	1892, 1901, 1926
b. 23, f. 261	Hopkins Grammar School	1871-1924
b. 23, f. 262	Law	1878-1897
	Loomis family	
	History	
b. 23, f. 263-264	General	1894-1935
b. 24, f. 265	<i>Loomis Family in America</i> English	1908
	Loomis, Francis E.	
b. 25, f. 266	General	1863-1918
b. 25, f. 267	Diaries	1866, 1908-1918
b. 25, f. 268-287	Estate	1918-1923
b. 25, f. 288	Grave	1918-1940
b. 25, f. 289	Loomis, Isabelle G.	1909-1947
b. 25, f. 290	Marriage	1898, 1900, undated

b. 25, f. 291-292	Masons	1882-1939
b. 25, f. 293	Notes, miscellaneous	undated
b. 26, f. 294	Personal financial records	1869-1881, 1904, 1927
b. 26, f. 295	Printed matter	undated
b. 26, f. 296-304	Real estate -- Seattle	1881-1924
b. 27, f. 305-311	Real estate -- Seattle	1881-1924
b. 28, f. 312-314	Real estate -- Seattle	1881-1924
b. 28, f. 315-317	Seattle	1885-1924
b. 28, f. 318-320	Taxes, income	1913-1926
b. 29, f. 321	Taxes, income	1913-1926
	Travel memorabilia	
b. 29, f. 322	General	1923-1925
b. 29, f. 323-324	Egypt	1906-1909
b. 29, f. 325	Italy	1906
b. 29, f. 326	Washington State Infantry	1885
b. 29, f. 327	Western Reserve College	1848-1939
b. 29, f. 328	Wills -- clippings	1917-1931
b. 29, f. 329-334	Yale University	1873-1939

Oversize

Elias Loomis Papers		
b. 30, f. 335	Family correspondence	1833-1834
b. 30, f. 336	Certificates, diplomas, passports	1836-1880
b. 30, f. 337	Photographs	undated
b. 30, f. 338-340	Meteorological maps and charts	undated
Henry B. Loomis Papers		
b. 30, f. 341	Certificates	1869-1922

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

Astronomers
Astronomy
Clergy
Education
Educators
Families
Genealogy
Lawyers
Logging -- Minnesota
Meteorology
Railroads
Science
Voyages and travels
Women -- Social conditions

Geographic Names

Alabama
Alton (Ill.)
Connecticut
Europe -- Description and travel
Georgia
Halley's comet
Illinois -- History
Middle West
Minnesota -- Politics and government -- To 1858
New England
Ohio
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
United States -- Social life and customs

Genres / Formats

Journals (notebooks)
Memoirs
Photoprints

Occupations

Meteorologists

Names

Bradford, Jerusha Loomis, 1806-1852

Edwards, Cyrus, 1793-1877
Edwards, Sophia Loomis, 1809-1897
Loomis, Daniel Burt, 1817-
Loomis, Elias, 1811-1889
Loomis, Francis E. (Francis Engelsby), 1842-1918
Loomis, Henry Bradford, 1853-1939
Loomis, Hubbel, 1775-1872
Loomis, Isabel G.
Loomis, John Calvin, 1822-
Lovejoy, Elijah P. (Elijah Parish), 1802-1837
Muir, John, 1838-1914
Newman, Caroline Loomis, 1814-1887

Families

Loomis family

Corporate Bodies

Shurtleff College (Upper Alton, Ill.)
Western Reserve University
Yale College (1718-1887). Class of 1875
Yale University -- Faculty