

Guide to the Henry Austin Papers

MS 1034



compiled by Diane E. Kaplan

October 1992

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
Yale University Library
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CALL NUMBER: MS 1034

CREATOR: Austin, Henry, 1804-1891

TITLE: Henry Austin papers

DATES: 1851-1865

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2.5 linear feet (10 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers consist of architectural drawings and specifications for domestic, religious, and public buildings in New Haven, Connecticut, surrounding environs, and elsewhere. Included also are the architect's watercolor sketches of proposed buildings and two licenses to practice architecture (1864-1865.)

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1034>

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.1034>.

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

Acquired by Yale University through gift and purchase between 1902 and 1942, and 1990; transferred to Manuscripts and Archives from Beinecke Rare Book Library in 1979.

Conditions Governing Access

These records are available for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Henry Austin Papers (MS 1034). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

Henry Austin, son of Daniel and Adah (Dorman) Austin, was born on December 4, 1804 in Mt. Carmel, Connecticut. By the time he was fifteen, Austin was employed as a carpenter. He worked for Ithiel Town, who had opened an office for the practice of architecture in New Haven about 1810. Austin was able to avail himself of Town's fine architectural library in order to further his training in architecture.

In 1836, Austin opened an office of his own. In 1842 he was commissioned to design a library for Yale College, modeled after King's College Chapel at Cambridge, England. In designing this building, Austin was assisted by Henry Flockton, an Englishman then employed in his office. Another notable design of Austin's was the massive brown-stone gateway (1845-1848), in the Egyptian style, of the historic Grove Street Cemetery, New Haven. In 1861 Austin was commissioned to design a City Hall for New Haven, in which he was assisted by David Russell Brown of his office. This building is in the Italian Gothic style. Among Austin's other New Haven buildings were the old Railway Station at the intersection of Union and Chapel Streets; the old New Haven House; the Cutler and Hoadley Buildings; the Yale, Tradesmen's Mechanics, and New Haven Savings Banks; Eaton School; and Trinity Church Home. He built so many private residences that it was said that almost every street in New Haven bore marks of his taste. Most of these were in the then fashionable so-called Tuscan or Italian style. Austin also built many churches throughout the state and elsewhere and designed the monument erected in 1846 in Coventry, Connecticut, to the memory of Nathan Hale.

Many men trained in Austin's office in the fifty-five years of his professional life, and he was known locally as the "Father of Architects." Austin died on December 17, 1891.

Based on: *Dictionary of American Biography*. New York, 1943. pp. 432-433

Scope and Contents

The Henry Austin Papers are composed of architectural drawings, design sketches, specifications, and photographs for buildings by Henry Austin and others. These materials represent only a fraction of the work Austin created during his long and productive architectural career.

The Yale University Library acquired the bulk of the Austin Papers through gifts and purchases between 1902 and 1942. George Dudley Seymour was one of the principal contributors of materials. The papers were stored in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library from 1963 until 1979, when they were transferred to the Manuscripts and Archives Department. In 1990 Peter Hale and John Kirby donated an additional eight items to the papers.

At the beginning of the papers, there are four boxes which contain watercolor design plates from two formerly bound volumes titled "Dwelling Houses, Stores, Banks, Churches and Monuments" and "Churches, Mansions and Villas." While the designs in the volume "Dwelling Houses" are generic, some of the designs in "Churches" actually specify the buildings for which the design was used. These include railroad stations in New Haven, Plainville, and Collinsville, Connecticut; residences in New Haven, Wallingford, New Britain, and Waterbury, Connecticut; and churches in Kent, Plainville, Portland, and Northford, Connecticut. The first pages in this volume include an index to all drawings in the volume.

The papers also include several additional drawings and specifications for residences in New Haven and Wallingford by Austin, as well as a few drawings which cannot be identified as Austin's. Photographs of the house designed by Austin for Ruggles S. Morse (Victoria Mansion) in Portland, Maine and Austin's licenses from the Internal Revenue Service are also in the papers.

The papers include a set of black and white photographic negatives of the drawings in the two design books, as well as of the drawings for the house on Chapel and Howe Streets in New Haven. The papers also include color slides of the drawings in the two design books (Box 9). These sets may be used to obtain copies of the originals, since no photocopies may be made from the original drawings. A duplicate set of the color slides is available for viewing in the Slide Collection in the Art and Architecture Library.

In order to protect the master set of color slides from excessive handling, Box 9 has been restricted and will not be made available for general research. Readers wishing to order a copy of a drawing should cite the title of the volume in which the drawing appears, using the abbreviation "CMV" for "Churches, Mansions, and Villas" and the abbreviation "DHS" for "Dwelling Houses, Stores, Banks, Churches and Monuments." To insure a proper identification of the matching slide, the reader should also include the design number, plate number, and page number as they appear on the drawing. For example, the first drawing in "Churches, Mansions, and Villas" would be indicated as CMV:I, I, 1, for design I, plate I, page 1.

New copy negatives made from the slides of the drawings are housed in box 10. As additional copy negatives are made they are added to this box. The reader services staff maintains a listing of the existing copy negatives.

Collection Contents

Dwelling Houses, Stores, Banks, Churches and Monuments

1851

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Churches, Mansions, and Villas

[ca. 1850]

Original watercolor sketches not be photocopied.

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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

Architects
Architecture -- Connecticut -- New Haven
Architecture -- Notebooks, sketchbooks, etc.

Geographic Names

New Haven (Conn.)

Names

Austin, Henry, 1804-1891
Dickerman, Charles, 1816-1897