

Guide to the Irving Goodwin Vann Collection

MS 1182



compiled by John Espy

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition	3
Conditions Governing Access	4
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
Biographical / Historical	4
Scope and Contents	5
Collection Contents	6
Selected Search Terms	7

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 1182

CREATOR: Vann, Irving Goodwin, 1842-1921, collector

TITLE: Vann collection

DATES: 1778-1887

BULK DATES: 1822-1887

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.25 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: A collection of autograph letters and facsimiles of which the largest number are letters to and from Daniel Webster. Also in the collection is a volume of drafts of letters, pamphlets, and speeches composed by Stephen Devalson Dillaye between 1864-1868 on current political issues. Dillaye was a Democrat who opposed radical abolitionism, but sided with the North in the Civil War.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1182>

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.1182>.

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 Irving Dillaye Vann and Florence Vann Fowler, 1934 and 1938.

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Vann Collection (MS 1182). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

Irving Goodwin Vann, 1842-1921

Yale College

Irving Goodwin Vann, B.A. 1863

Born January 3, 1842, in Ulysses, N.Y.

Died March 22, 1921, in Syracuse, N.Y.

Irving Goodwin Vann, son of Samuel R. Vann, a farmer, who was born in New Jersey but spent most of his life in Ulysses, N.Y., and Catharine (Goodwin) Vann, was born in Ulysses, January 3, 1842. His paternal grandparents were Samuel and Mary (Bond) Vann, and his earliest known American ancestor on his father's side was his great-grandfather, Samuel Vann, a native of New Jersey and a Lieutenant in the Revolutionary War. His mother was the daughter of Joseph Goodwin, a soldier in the war of 1812, and Ruth (Stout) a native of New England, whose son Richard, who was born in Pennsylvania, removed early in the nineteenth century to Goodwin's point on Cayuga Lake, N.Y.

He was fitted for college at Trumansburg Academy, about four miles from Ulysses, completing his preparation by a year of study at the Ithaca (N.Y.) Academy.

During the first year after graduation he was principal of the Pleasant Valley High School near Owensboro, Ky., resigning his position to begin the study of law in the office of Boardman & Finch (Douglass Boardman, '42, and Francis M. Finch, '49) in Ithaca. In the fall of 1864 he entered the Albany Law School, where he received the degree of LL.B. in 1865. For a few months he was a clerk in the Treasury Department, but resigned that position in October, 1865, and removed to Syracuse. He was a clerk in the law office of Raynor and Butler until March 1, 1866, when he began practice, and was subsequently a member of the firms of Vann & Fiske, Raynor & Vann, Fuller & Vann, and Vann, McLennan & Dillaye. In his practice he preferred to conduct cases after the facts had been settled, by arguing the questions of law in the appellate courts, and heard and decided many cases as referee until his practice became so large that he was obliged to confine himself to the business of his own office. In 1881 he was elected a justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York and held office from January, 1882, until January, 1888, when he was selected by the governor of New York as one of seven justices of the Supreme Court constituting the Second Division of the Court of Appeals of that state. He served in that capacity until the division was dissolved four years later, and then returned to the circuit. In the fall of 1895 he was reelected a justice of the Supreme Court by the unanimous vote of his district, having been nominated by both parties. In the following January he was appointed by Governor Morton a judge of the Court of Appeals in the place of Rufus W. Peckham, who had resigned in

order to accept the position of a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. In September, 1896, he was unanimously nominated by the Republican party for the full term of fourteen years, and at the ensuing election was chosen by the largest majority ever received by a state officer at a contested election in the state. He was reelected in 1910, being nominated by both parties, and served until December 31, 1912, when he resigned on account of having reached the age limit. He continued, however, to act as official referee and as council until 1920. He was actively engaged in several political campaigns, and in 1879 was elected mayor of Syracuse. His administration was characterized by the lowest taxes that the city had known for many years, and he retired from office, after declining a renomination, with every debt contracted by his administration fully paid, and with a large balance left in the treasury. He was one of the founders of the Onondaga Bar Association and had served as second and first vice-president and as president. He was also one of the founders of the New York State Bar Association, the Century Club of Syracuse, the Yale Club of Syracuse, and the Alumni Association of the Albany Law School, and had held office as president of the last three organizations. He assisted in organizing Woodlawn Cemetery in 1881 and was its president for many years, was one of the founders and a trustee of the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, and served as president of the Onondaga Red Cross Society at its inception. He was a member of the New York State Historical Association, the Onondaga Country Historical Society and the Albany Historical Society. He had been a lecturer at the Syracuse Law School, the Cornell School of Law, and the Albany Law School, and was a trustee of the last-named. He had served as a member of the Yale Alumni Advisory Board. The honorary degree of LL.D. was conferred upon him by Hamilton in 1882, by Syracuse in 1897, and by Yale in 1898. He was very fond of books and had a library of more than 10,000 volumes, many of which are rare. He also had a collection of nearly two hundred guns, selected to mark the progress of invention in firearms.

He died March 22, 1921, at his home in Syracuse, from heart disease. Interment was in Oakwood Cemetery.

He was married October 11, 1870, in Syracuse, to Julie Florence, daughter of Henry Augustus and Sarah Jane (Birdsall) Dillaye, who survives him with their two children, Florence Dillaye (Mrs. Albert P. Fowler) and Irving Dillaye (B.A. 1897).

Yale Obituary Record, No. 22, 1921, pp. 33-35

Scope and Contents

The Vann Collection is a small collection of letters and miscellaneous papers. Irving Goodwin Vann (Yale 1863) was an avid book collector, and most of the papers were found inside various volumes when his library was given to Yale by his children, Irving Dillaye Vann (Yale 1897) and Florence Dillaye (Vann) Fowler, in 1934 and 1938. Most of the materials are of more interest for their autograph value than for their content. Many are letters of introduction or of financial business. However, one of the letters to Daniel Webster (that of Henry A.S. Dearborn) praises his speech on the proposed Congress at Panama; and the drafts of letters by Webster concern a law case and his views on slavery.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the collection is the volume of writings by Stephen Devalson Dillaye (1820-84). With one other item (concerning Judah Lee Bliss), and its provenance is uncertain. (The Bliss item may have been placed in the collection because of its connection with Daniel Webster.) Dillaye may have been related to Vann's wife's family. He received an LL.B. from Harvard in 1845. He published several books and pamphlets on political subjects; the earliest, in 1858, was a pamphlet protesting the loss of his post as U.S. General Appraiser at New York. His writings here include drafts of political letters, speeches, and pamphlets written in the period 1864-1868. Dillaye was a Democrat who opposed radical abolitionism, but he sided with the North in the Civil War, and came to admire Lincoln, and to support Andrew Johnson against the Republican wing led by Thaddeus Stevens. His letters address Nathaniel P. Banks, Salmon P. Chase, Roscoe Conkling, William M. Evarts, William P. Fessenden, Horace Greeley, Johnson, and William H. Seward, among others.

Collection Contents

Correspondence of Daniel Webster

Outgoing (drafts of letters)

b. 1, f. 1	Ward, Thomas W.	1822
b. 1, f. 1	[Longue?], James English	1835

Incoming

b. 1, f. 1	Dearborn, Henry A.S.	1826
b. 1, f. 1	Bartlett, Ichabod	1829
	Barnard, Daniel Dewey	1829
b. 1, f. 1	Grinnell, Moses Hicks	1843
b. 1, f. 1	Hume, Joseph	1851

Miscellaneous

b. 1, f. 1	Bliss, Judah Lee: facsimiles of letter to him from Webster and of passage from Webster's "Reply to Hayne" which letter enclosed; with copy of letter from Bliss to Webster, and notes by Bliss	1843-72
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b. 1, f. 2 - 3 Miscellaneous

b. 1, f. 3	Great Britain. War Office: order, signed by William W. Barrington, directing Messrs. Meyrick to pay Lt. Col. Samuel Townsend	1778
b. 1, f. 3	Bingham, Caleb: autograph letter, signed, to John Fellows	1782
b. 1, f. 3	Dickinson, Daniel Stevens: autograph letter, signed, to J. Anthony	1845
b. 1, f. 3	Marcy, William Learned: autograph letter, signed, to Reuben Withers	1846
b. 1, f. 3	Dickinson, Daniel Stevens: autograph letter, signed, to Abraham Lincoln introducing Elizabeth Slayton	1864
b. 1, f. 3	Lea, Henry Charles: autograph letter, signed, to Charles W. Squires	1873
b. 1, f. 3	Carpenter, Francis Bicknell: autograph letter, signed, to Mary Louise Booth	1878
b. 1, f. 3	Lossing, Benson J.: quotation from the Marquis de Chastellux about Washington	1887
b. 1, f. 4 - 6	Dillaye, Stephen Devalson: volume of drafts of letters, pamphlets, and speeches on political subjects	1864-68

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.

Geographic Names

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
United States -- Politics and government --
1865-1869

Genres / Formats

Autographs

Names

Barnard, Daniel D. (Daniel Dewey), 1797-1861
Bartlett, Ichabod, 1786-1853
Bingham, Caleb, 1757-1817
Carpenter, F. B. (Francis Bicknell), 1830-1900
Dearborn, H. A. S. (Henry Alexander Scammell),
1783-1851
Dickinson, Daniel S. (Daniel Stevens), 1800-1866
Dillaye, Stephen D. (Stephen Devalson),
1820-1884
Grinnell, Moses Hicks, 1803-1877
Hume, Joseph, 1777-1855
Lea, Henry Charles, 1825-1909
Marcy, William L. (William Learned), 1786-1857
Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852