

# ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

## A Guide to the Banks Family Papers

---

### Summary Information

**Repository**

Albany Institute of History & Art Library

**Title**

Banks Family Papers

**Identifier**

DM 580

**Date**

1798-1973

**Physical Description**

3 boxes

**Physical Location**

The materials are located onsite in the Museum.

**Language of the Material**

English

**Abstract**

The Banks Family Papers collection consists of personal and legal papers of Robert Lenox Banks and his family, primarily his daughter, Mary Decamp Banks Moore. These include correspondence to and from the Banks Family by local businessmen, politicians, such as New York Governor, John T. Hoffman, and William Vanderbilt, President of the Hudson River Railroad. The documents are mostly personal in nature, describing the private life of a prominent local family of the 19th Century. Also in this collection are photographs, genealogical information, and other items relating to the Banks, Lenox, and Corning families.

## **Preferred Citation**

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Banks Family Papers, 1798-1973, DM 580. Albany Institute of History & Art Library, Albany, New York.

---

## **Conditions Governing Access and Use**

### **Restrictions on Access**

None

### **Copyright**

The researcher assumes full responsibility for conforming with the laws of copyright. Whenever possible, the Albany Institute of History & Art Library will provide information about copyright owners and other restrictions, but the legal determination ultimately rests with the researcher. Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be discussed with the Archivist/Librarian.

---

## **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Accession: # unidentified

Accession Source/Date: unidentified donor, 1972

---

## **Processing Information**

Processed by J. Wassong, June 1991; finding aid updated by E. Schafer and M. Kessler, July 2004; finding aid updated by H. Cox, June 2021.

---

## **Biographical/Historical**

Robert Lenox Banks was born to William and Isabella Henderson Lenox Banks in New York City on March 6, 1828. His paternal grandfather, James Banks, came to America from Northern England, where he was the Master of a Mason Lodge. He also worked as a shipping and commission merchant in Jamaica. Robert Lenox, his maternal grandfather, was a merchant in New York City.

In 1848, Robert Lenox Banks graduated from Princeton, then later married Emma Rathbone Turner in 1857. They had one child, Robert Lenox Banks, Jr., who was born in 1864. Emma Banks died in 1866 and eleven years later Banks married Mary deCamp Corning, daughter of U.S. Navy Rear Admiral John deCamp. She was the widow of Edwin Weld Corning. Edwin was the nephew of Erastus Corning, the President of the New York Central Railroad. In 1878, Robert and his wife had a daughter, Mary deCamp Banks.

Robert Lenox Banks served as Secretary and Assistant Treasurer of the New York Central Railroad, and by appointment of New York Governor John T. Hoffman, worked for the New York, Susquehanna, and Western Railroads. He also served as QuarterMaster General and Aide-de-Camp to Hoffman. In 1880, Banks was nominated for Mayor of Albany but did not run for election. Banks was active in civic and societal activities throughout his lifetime. He served as Alderman of Albany in 1868; Deputy Sheriff for Albany County, 1869; President of the Albany branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; the Albany YMCA; the Albany Humane Society; the Princeton Club; and the Albany City Curling Club. He was a Secretary to the Board of Directors of the Albany Rural Cemetery, and a member of the Albany Park Commission, the Eastern New York Fish and Game Protective Association, the Adirondack Forestry Commission of New York State, the Fort Orange Club, the Masons, and the Albany Historical and Art Society. Banks died in Albany on November 7, 1898.

---

## Scope and Contents

The Banks Family Papers, 1798-1973, consists of personal and legal papers, correspondence, and photographs of Robert Lenox Banks and his family. Although the collection spans the years 1798 to 1973, the majority of the papers date from the 1860's. The collection is divided up into three series: Robert Lenox Banks Papers, Mary deCamp Banks Moore Papers, and Banks Family Papers. Mary deCamp Banks Moore provides background information on some of the photographs and letters in the collection.

The bulk of the Robert Lenox Banks Papers, 1836-1895, are letters from his mother, Isabella Lenox Banks, his sister, Maria, and brother, James Lenox, and from personal friends. These primarily discuss family and social activities. Only a few letters contain references to politics, the use of railroad passes, and travel arrangements for his visit to Lebanon Springs. The folder of Robert Lenox Banks' personal papers contains papers relating to his memberships and appointments, as well as receipts for personal business and legal papers for property transactions.

The Mary DeCamp Banks Moore Papers, 1885-1938, consists of correspondence and personal papers. Most of the correspondence, especially from James Lenox Banks, reflects her strong interest in genealogy and provides factual information on family members. Correspondence regarding her donation to the Paulist Fathers' archives, letters written to her father by Fr. Young, are included. Also in this series are pencil drawings

made for her by her father, the engraved announcement of her wedding to Maurice Moore in 1901, and a copy in her own writing of a fairy tale as told by Fr. Young.

The Banks Family Papers, 1798-1973, consists mainly of estate and personal papers. Included in the estate papers are wills of several family members: Robert Lenox Banks, William Banks, Isabella Henderson Lenox Banks, and Robert Lenox Banks, Jr. There are also documents pertaining to the administration of the wills, the receipt and deed for the Banks family plot at Albany Rural Cemetery, estate estimates, undertaker's bills, correspondence, and photographs. The personal papers consist of personal correspondence. William Banks' papers include his citizenship papers, legal documents regarding his property, and a letter. In the folder of Robert Lenox's papers is a letter and a dinner invitation. The folder of biographical and genealogical information contains designs of the Banks coat of arms, including some drawn by Robert Lenox Banks. A few examples of stationery and stamps featuring it are included. It also contains a memorial written by James Ten Eyck for Robert Lenox Banks. There are genealogical charts, one of the Lenox-Banks Family, the other of descendants of the Banks-Ogden family. This series also contains Isabella Henderson Lenox Banks' diaries of traveling in primarily Great Britain and Scotland, circa 1865. There is an ivory covered prayer book owned by Mary deCamp Corning Banks, Robert Lenox Banks' Bible and book of Psalms and Hymns, Isabella L. Banks' copy of Imitation of Christ and another prayer book. Photographs of family members include Robert Lenox Banks, Mary deCamp Banks Moore and Isabella Mozier Banks. Other notable photographs are of the homes of James Lenox Banks and his wife Isabella Mozier, of the memorial on the Banks' family plot, their house on State Street in Albany, and the family at the Fort William Henry Hotel in Lake George. The black and white postcards contain views of Albany spanning the years 1605-1924. A leather-encased coat-of-arms used by William and James Banks is also included in this series.

---

## Contents List

The following section contains a listing of the materials in the collection.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
<b>Robert Lenox Banks Papers, 1836-1895</b>		
Isabella L. Banks Correspondence		
1856-1863	1	1
1863		2
1863-1864		3
1864-1866		4
Undated		5
Personal papers, 1858-1894		6
Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1862-1895		7
Correspondence from Lenox Family, 1836-1877		8
Correspondence from James Lenox Banks, 1861-1865		9

Correspondence from Maria Banks, 1861-1865		10
Correspondence from Governor John Hoffman, 1870-1887		11
Correspondence from Erastus W. and John Corning, 1861-1866		12
<b>Mary DeCamp Banks Moore Papers, 1885-1938</b>		
Correspondence from James Lenox Banks, 1911-1937		13
Correspondence from Robert L. and Mary deCamp Banks, 1886-1897		14
Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1911-1938		15
Personal Papers, 1885-1901		16
<b>Banks Family Papers, 1798-1973</b>		
Estate Papers, 1840-1923	2	1
Biographical and Genealogical Information, 1862-1932		2
Photographs and postcards, undated		3
Photographs, undated		4
Miscellaneous Family Papers, 1849-1973		5
William Banks Papers, 1837-1845		6
Certificates of Stock, 1836-1849		7
Robert Lenox Banks Papers, 1798-1823		8
Prayer Books, undated	3	1
Diaries of Isabella L. Banks, circa 1865		2
Prayer Books, undated		3