

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

A Guide to the Banks Family Papers

Collection Summary

Collection Title: Banks Family Papers

Call Number: DM 580

Creator: unknown

Inclusive Dates: 1798-1973

Bulk Dates: 1836-1895

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 NY 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, and would be of interest to anyone researching the Banks, Lenox and Corning family histories and genealogies. It might be noted that Robert's second wife was the widow of Edwin Weld Corning, nephew of Erastus Corning I. There is some information on Albany history, primarily in the postcards, but also throughout the letters.

Quantity: 1.25 lin. ft., 3 document boxes

Administrative Information

Custodial History: Donated by the Estate of Maurice Moore in 1972.

Preferred Citation: Banks Family Papers (DM 580) Albany Institute of History & Art Library, New York.

Acquisition Information:

Accession #: unknown

Accession Date: 1972

Processing Information:

Processed by Jean Wassong; completed in June 1991. Current finding aid compiled by Elizabeth Schafer and Maria Kessler, completed on 02 July 2004.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: Permission to publish material must be obtained in writing prior to publication from the Chief Librarian & Archivist, Albany Institute of History & Art, 125 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12210.

Index Term

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Banks, Maria
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Banks Sr., Gen. Robert Lenox
Banks Jr., Robert Lenox
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Riallard, Eliza Banks
Turner, Emma Rathbone
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Organizations

New York Central Railroad
Hudson River Railroad

Subjects

Family Life
Genealogy
Letters
Railroads

Places

New York -- Albany
New York -- Lake George
New York -- New York City

Document Types

Greeting Cards
Diaries
Family Certificates
Letterhead
Letters
Photographs
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Prayer Books

Biography of Banks Family and Robert Lenox Banks

Robert Lenox Banks was born in New York City on March 6, 1828, the son of William Banks and Isabella Henderson Lenox Banks. 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. He 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 Quarter-Master 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: 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; of the Albany YMCA; of the Albany Humane Society; of the Princeton Club; and of 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. He died in Albany on November 7, 1898.

Scope and Contents of the Papers

The BANKS FAMILY PAPERS, 1798-1973, consist 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 Series I. 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. For the most part these discuss family and social activities. Only a few letters from his friend, New York Governor John T. Hoffman, contain references to politics. A letter from William Vanderbilt, President of the Hudson River Railroad Company, discusses the use of railroad passes. There is a letter from the Minister of Russia to the U.S. regarding the 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 (notably, receipts of payment to John Heard who served as Banks' substitute for military duty) and legal papers for property transactions.

Series II. 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 much 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.

Series III. 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, an estimate of Isabella L. Banks' estate, undertaker's bills, correspondence between Mary Banks Moore and the Albany Cemetery Association about perpetual care, and a mounted picture of an English memorial to Josephine Lenox Banks are included. The personal papers consist of a personal letter to Emma Banks from John L. Pruyn, a letter to James L. Banks from his sister Elizabeth Banks Brooks regarding the receipt of an annuity payment, and a letter

from the United Virginia Bank to Eva Moore who was interested in obtaining Banks family information. William Banks' papers include his United States citizenship paper of 1837, legal documents regarding his property, and a letter about the purchase of a shawl. In the folder of Robert Lenox's papers is a letter written by him in 1798 recommending a Mr. Shute for the position of Commissioner of Revenue, and a dinner invitation to William Banks, his son-in-law. 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.

The oversize folder (which contains material removed from the Robert Banks and Mary Banks Moore series) includes two certificates announcing Banks' appointments as Aide-de-Camp and Quartermaster General and a certificate of his membership in the Eastern New York Fish and Game Protective Association; a Christmas card (1952) from the Hudson Valley Paper Company and the Troy Paper Company. *Please note: these items could not be located at the time this finding aid was created.*

Organization of the Papers

The papers are organized into three series as follows:

- I. Robert Lenox Banks papers
- II. Mary DeCamp Banks Moore papers
- III. Banks Family papers

Family certificates and cards located in an oversize box are listed on the original finding aid, but could not be located at the time this finding aid was created.

Related Material

There is a British Royal Navy Flag, once owned by Robert L. Banks, which now resides in Maryland. See letter in source files to AIHA from Robert T. Banks, who is of known relation to this family.

Portraits of Robert Lenox of Scotland are to be found in the New York Public Library and Princeton University.

See also the **Erastus Corning** papers for further information on the Corning family.

There is more material on the **New York Central Railroad** in special collections.

Separated Materials

Family certificates and cards located in an oversize box are listed on the original finding aid, but could not be located at the time this finding aid was created.

Family portraits done by *Charles Loring Elliott* in Albany and *William Oliver Stone* in Newport, RI.

Articles of clothing, baptismal dresses and women's gowns, some sterling silver pieces (many with the Banks family crest) donated to the museum by Eva Moore.

Other Finding Aids

A finding aid for this collection was made in June 1991 and is now located in the control files.

Detailed Description of the Banks Family Papers

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

Series #: 1 Series Title: Robert Lenox Banks Papers (1836-1895)

Box #	Folder #	Title / Description
1	1	1856-63. Letters from Isabella L. Banks
1	2	1863. Letters from Isabella L. Banks
1	3	1863-4. Letters from Isabella L. Banks
1	4	1864-6. Letters from Isabella L. Banks
1	5	n.d. Letters from Isabella L. Bank
1	6	1858-94. Personal papers
1	7	1862-95. Miscellaneous correspondence
1	8	1836-77. Letters from Lenox family
1	9	1861-5. Letters from James Lenox Banks
1	10	1861-6. Letters from Maria Banks
1	11	1870-87. Letters from Gov. John Hoffman
1	12	1861-6. Letters from Erastus W. and John Corning

Series#: 2 Series Title: Mary DeCamp Banks Moore Papers (1885-1938)

Box #	Folder #	Title / Description
1	13	1911-37. Letters from James Lenox Banks
1	14	1886-97. Letters from Robert L. and Mary deCamp Banks
1	15	1911-38. Miscellaneous correspondence
1	16	1885-1901. Personal papers

Series#: 3 Series Title: Banks Family Papers

Box #	Folder #	Title / Description
2	1	1840-1923. Estate Papers
2	2	1862-1932. Biographical and genealogical information
2	3	n.d. Photographs and postcards
2	4	n.d. Photographs
2	5	1849-1973. Miscellaneous Family Papers
2	6	1837-45. William Banks papers
2	7	1836-49. Certificates of stock
2	8	1798-1823. Robert Lenox Banks papers
3	1	n.d. Prayer books
3	2	ca. 1865. Diaries of Isabella L. Banks
3	3	n.d. Prayer books