

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

A Guide to the Annesley & Co. Collection

Summary Information

Repository

Albany Institute of History & Art Library

Title

Annesley and Co. Collection

Identifier

MG 231

Date

1860-1875

Physical Description

1 box

Physical Location

The materials are located onsite in the Museum.

Language of the Material

English

Abstract

Lawson Annesley founded Annesley and Co. in Albany, New York in 1802. After a few years taking on different partners, Annesley's sons took over the business, which remained headed by the family until 1909. The company was known for selling fine furniture, looking glasses, and artist's supplies, and was often referred to as the "Albany Art Gallery." Annesley and Co. closed in the 1940s.

This collection contains a daybook, advertisements, and a price list.

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

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Accession Source/Date: unidentified donor, 2003

Processing Information

Processed by L. Whitehead, September 2012; finding aid updated by H. Cox, June 2021.

Biographical/Historical

Lawson Annesley, a native of Bordentown, New Jersey, founded Annesley and Co. in Albany, New York in 1802. Lawson, along with his younger brother William, was a gilder specializing in looking glasses and picture frames. In 1813, the shop was located at 16 Steuben Street, and later relocated to 294 North Market Street. In 1823, they moved again to a larger location at 325-327 North Market Street, and relocated again in the 1830s to 309-311 N. Market Street, where they began to advertise first as a looking glass

store and then as a looking glass warehouse. During the 1840's, Annesley and Co. moved twice, first to 46 Broadway in 1841 and second, in 1846, to 504 Broadway.

The company's first major change came in 1856 when Lawson Annesley took on Marshall K. Williamson as a partner. The company name was changed to Annesley and Williamson. It was also the first year that the Annesleys advertised in the Albany Directories. Annesley and Williamson were billed as manufacturers and dealers of looking glasses as well as sellers of portraits, picture frames, engravings and artists' materials, and were also listed as a Picture Gallery. In the following year, Lawson entered into a partnership with B.H. Veeder and Company. Veeder owned a goldbeating company, which he had founded two years earlier, located at 45 Hudson Street. Also in 1857, Issac and Richard, Lawson's sons, were brought into the family business as clerks. The company's advertisement in the Albany Directory of that year showed that the business had expanded to include not only frames, looking glasses and artists' materials but also paintings and engravings from America and abroad. Around this time, the Annesley's store was described as a place where artists and people interested in art could meet informally.

In 1858, Issac Annesley became a partner in the business and, although Marshall Williamson continued to be a partner, the name reverted back to the original Annesley and Co. The following year, Richard Annesley left the company to work as a sign painter for O.S. Rice & Co. In 1860, the Annesley family's partnerships with B.H. Veeder and Marshall Williamson came to an end and the company name was changed to Annesley and Son. Lawson, in his mid to late 70's, retired in 1861. His son, Issac, took on Thomas R. Ferris as a partner to replace him, and the company's name changed once again, this time to Annesley and Ferris.

In 1865, Issac Annesley died suddenly in his early 40's and his younger brother Richard took over the business. Following his career as a sign painter for O.S. Rice and Co., Richard opened his own shop in 1862, located at 501 Broadway. That venture was short-lived, however, as Richard accepted a commission as a lieutenant in the 43rd Regiment in 1863. When he returned to Albany at the close of the Civil War to take over his late brother's business, he was a Captain. Lawson came out of retirement part-time to help with the business, and James Vint, a man first employed by the company as a porter in 1863, and then as a salesman starting in 1864, became a partner. The partnership between Vint and Annesley lasted for the next twenty years. Lawson Annesley returned to the company on a full time basis in 1867, then retired again in 1875. During this time, Annesley & Vint advertised itself simply as sellers of looking glasses, pictures, and frames.

On September 1, 1875, Annesley & Vint moved from 504-506 Broadway to 57 North Pearl Street where the company remained until 1915. In 1881, the company's founder, Lawson Annesley, died in his late 90's. A year later James Vint's son, James H. Vint, the company bookkeeper, became a partner. In the Albany Directory of that year, Annesley & Vint ceased to advertise themselves as sellers of looking glasses, but rather as purveyors of picture frames, fine furniture, upholstery, and hangings, while also referring to

themselves as the Albany Art Gallery. In 1885, the senior James Vint left the business to set up his own shop on 34 North Pearl Street specializing in artists' supplies. His son remained with Annesley although the name reverted back to Annesley and Co. With the departure of the elder Vint, the company began to turn from manufacturing to a gallery for both art and fine furniture.

In 1890, the partnership with the younger Vint dissolved, and Richard Annesley never took on another partner. By 1893, the phrase "Albany Art Gallery" came to dominate the Albany Directory advertisements of Annesley and Co. Over the next few years, the advertisements of the company changed little, consistently offering etchings, paintings and frames, but also at various times fine furniture, antiques, cut glass, oriental rugs, and artists supplies. The company was incorporated in 1905. On October 24, 1909, the last Annesley to run the company, Richard Annesley, died. Ambrose Boylan, who had begun at Annesley and Co. as a clerk in 1885, succeeded Richard Annesley as president. Within two years of taking over the company, Boylan shifted focus and, while continuing to offer art, frames and antiques, Annesley and Co. began to make and modify fine furniture at their new factory located at 40 James Street. In 1915, the company moved back to its 1874 location at 504-506 Broadway. Annesley and Co. ceased to advertise in the Albany Directory after 1930. Sixteen years later it moved again to 121 State Street. By 1941, Annesley and Co. was listed as selling antiques at 20a Steuben Street. All mention of the company disappeared after 1944. In its final years, Annesley and Co. became primarily an antique dealer and furniture maker.

Scope and Contents

This small collection consists of a circular advertisement, a price list for "mahogany and gilt framed looking glasses," and a daybook for the years 1874-1875. The daybook is leather bound and contains hand written records of sales and transactions.

Contents List

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

Description	Box	Folder
Price List, circa 1850s-1860s	1	1
Circular; "Steam Looking Glass and Gilt Moulding Factory," L. Annesley & Co., 504 & 506 Broadway, Albany, NY, circa 1850s-1860s		2
Daybook, 1874-1875		3