

ALBANY INSTITUTE
OF HISTORY & ART

A Guide to the
Palmer-Gavit Family Papers

Collection Summary

Collection Title: Palmer-Gavit Family Papers

Call Number: MG 12

Inclusive Dates: 1815-1985

Abstract: The Palmer-Gavit Family Papers include the correspondence, writings, genealogy, scrapbooks, photographs, and articles pertaining to the entire Gavit family. The collection also contains correspondence, reference materials, scrapbooks, record books and writings related to Erastus Dow Palmer and Walter Launt Palmer.

Quantity: 5 Boxes

Administrative Information

Custodial History: Donated by Christopher West

Preferred Citation: Palmer-Gavit Family Papers, MG 12. Albany Institute of History & Art Library, New York.

Acquisition Information:

Accession #: MG 12

Accession Date: October 26, 2011

Processing Information:

Lindsey Moore, October 2011.

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

Persons

Bradish, John	Gavit, Lucy Lamont	Riley, James Whitcomb
Curie, Pierre	Gavit, Margaret Sophia	Roosevelt, Franklin
Dutta, Narendranath	Robinson	Delano
Emerson, Ralph Waldo	Gavit, Pauline	Seamans, James
Faraday, Michael	Gavit, Walter Palmer	Easterbrooks
Gavit, Fanny Breese	Hughes, Charles	Smith, Alfred
Palmer	Huxley, Thomas Henry	Stevenson, Robert Louis
Gavit, Helen Montague	James, William	Taft, William Howard
Gavit, Helen Palmer	Kelvin, Lord William	Taylor, Graham
Gavit, John Edmonds	Thompson	Van Buren, Martin
Gavit, John Palmer	Lowell, James Russel	West, Christopher
Gavit, Joseph	Morgan, John Pierpont	Whitman, Walter
Gavit, Joseph Lamont	Palmer, Erastus Dow	Wilson, Thomas
Gavit, Joseph Launt	Palmer, Walter Launt	Woodrow
Gavit, Julia	Parker, Alton	Wordsworth, William

Organizations

The Century Club
Chicago Commons Council
Chicago Theological Seminary
First Congregational Church of Chicago
Fort Orange Club
Hudson River School
Proctor's Theater – Albany, NY

Subjects

Art – Sculpture
Art – Engraving
Art – Painting
Family History
Theology

Places

Adirondack Mountains – New York
Albany – New York

Boston – Massachusetts
Chicago – Illinois
New York City – New York
Schenectady – New York
Washington, D.C.

Biography/History of

John Edmonds Gavit was born in New York City, October 29, 1817. Employed as an engraver in several firms before striking out on his own, his influence led to the creation of the American Bank Note Co., and standardized many of the practices used in bank note production and processing that are still extant today on an international scale.

Over the span of his life, Gavit involved himself in the sciences and made friends with several key innovators of the day. Gavit was also an appreciator of the arts an avid supporter of the Hudson Valley School of Artists, which is where he came into contact with Erastus Dow Palmer.

Gavit married Margaret Sophia Robinson and together they had eight children: Joseph Gavit, Margaret Gavit, William Gavit, Helen Gavit, Clark Gavit, Julia Gavit, Chloe Gavit, and Pauline Gavit. The Joseph Gavit line is the family group which with this collection is primarily concerned.

Joseph Gavit, born December 22, 1842, married Fanny Breese Palmer, daughter of Erastus Dow Palmer. Together they had seven children; John Palmer Gavit, Henry Fassett Gavit, Erastus Palmer Gavit, Helen Palmer Gavit, Joseph Launt Gavit, Mary Isabel Gavit, and Walter Palmer Gavit. Joseph Gavit followed in the footsteps of his father and was involved in engraving, printmaking and also in support of the arts.

The bulk of the collection focuses on Joseph Gavit's oldest son, John Palmer Gavit who was married to Lucy Lamont. John Palmer Gavit, like his father and grandfather before him was interested in the arts. John Palmer Gavit was a prolific writer and wrote several plays that were produced at Proctor's Theater in Albany, NY. He also had several articles published in prominent magazines such as Time and Harpers. Among his publications are the book Americans by Choice and Opium. John Palmer Gavit joined the staff of the Associated Press in 1902 and later accepted the position of Chief of Staff of the Washington Bureau of the Associated Press.

Actively engaged in politics, John Palmer Gavit was in constant contact with many high-ranking politicians, among them United States Presidents, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, William H. Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. In 1930, as Governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt appointed John Palmer Gavit to the New York State Commission on Narcotics, a position he declined, even though he remained in contact with the Commission as a non-appointed advisor. Correspondence with Woodrow Wilson indicates that John Palmer Gavit also had some influence over Woodrow Wilson's decisions regarding the Prohibition Act.

Through conversations with Chicago based Reverend Graham Taylor, John Palmer Gavit developed his interest in theology, which extended in turn to his family. In 1918 his wife, Lucy Lamont Gavit revealed to him that she could act as a medium

between the spiritual world and the physical world. He met this with skepticism but as is recorded in the bound collection of conversations included in the Palmer Gavit Family Papers, 'Talking Across: A Record of Many Conversations, his belief in the experience was changed. The bound volume 'Talking Across' contains conversations transcribed primarily by Lucy Lamont Gavit from spirits beyond the 'veil' to a small audience of friends and family who were present to witness the event. Conversations contained in the transcriptions include those with the oldest son of John Palmer Gavit and Lucy Lamont Gavit who was born and died in 1901. Also included are conversations with famous historical figures such as Michael Faraday, J.P. Morgan, Thomas Henry Huxley, James Whitcomb Riley, Lord William Thompson Kelvin, Walt Whitman, Swami Vivekananda, William Wordsworth, Robert Louis Stevenson, Pierre Curie, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The conversations ranged from scientific analysis of the spiritual world in relation to the physical world with the scientists, to the transcription of new poetry or prose from the deceased authors.

Erastus Dow Palmer, to whom a portion of the collection is related, was a prominent artist and sculptor, active from 1846-1904, who lived in Albany, New York. The bulk of his information, including a detailed biography are contained in the Erastus Dow Palmer Collection (AQ 185) at the Albany Institute of History and Art. Walter Launt Palmer, son of Erastus Dow Palmer, was also a prominent Albany artist, active from 1872-1923. The majority of the information related to him, including a detailed biography can be found in the Walter Launt Palmer Collection (BV 448) at the Albany Institute of History and Art.

Scope and Contents of the Records/Papers/Collection

The collection consists of correspondence, diaries, genealogy, scrapbooks, written works, scientific records, and photographs primarily related to the Gavit Family. The collection also contains scrapbooks, reference material, correspondence, donation and exhibition information related to Erastus Dow Palmer and Walter Launt Palmer.

Organization of the Records/Papers/Collection

None

Related Material

AQ 185 Erastus Dow Palmer Collection
BV 448 Walter Launt Palmer Collection

Detailed Description of the Records/Papers/Collection
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The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

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1	1	John Bradish Financial Records for Services Provided to Martin Van Buren 1815-1817
1	2	James Easterbrooks Seamans Correspondence 1816-1818
1	3	Robinson Family 1822-1832
1	4	John Edmonds Gavit - Scientific Records 1846
1	5	John Edmonds Gavit - Correspondence 1855-1877
1	6	John Edmonds Gavit - Account Books 1858-1860
1	7	John Edmonds Gavit –Final Words 1874
1	8	John Edmonds Gavit – Engraving of the New York State of Arms 1848-1878
1	9	John Edmonds Gavit – National Encyclopedia of American Biography Entry
1	10-15	Margaret Sophia Robinson Gavit – Financial Diaries 1858-1888
1	16	Autobiography of Margaret Sophia Gavit
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1	18	Joseph Gavit – Commonplace Book 1864
1	19	Joseph Gavit – Army Records 1864-1872
1	20	Joseph Gavit – Correspondence 1870-1882
1	21	Fanny Breese Palmer Gavit – Correspondence 1893-1917
1	22	Fanny Breese Palmer Gavit – Hand-written Biography Notes on Her Father Erastus Dow Palmer 1827
1	23	Joseph Launt Gavit – Correspondence 1900-1957
1	24	Joseph Launt Gavit – Miscellany 1900-1946
1	25-26	Joseph Launt Gavit – Correspondence with Walter Palmer Gavit 1915-1939
		Box 2 -- Gavit Family
2	1-3	Joseph Launt Gavit – Correspondence with Walter Palmer Gavit 1940-1957
2	4	Joseph Launt Gavit – Correspondence with John Palmer Gavit 1922-1940
2	5	John Palmer Gavit – Wedding Guest Book 1890

2	6	John Palmer Gavit – Sketchbook 1894
2	7	John Palmer Gavit – Record Book 1906
2	8-9	John Palmer Gavit – ‘His Neighbor’s Window’ 1903
2	10-11	John Palmer Gavit – ‘Burglar’s Secret’ 1905
2	12	John Palmer Gavit – ‘A Peach of a Story’ 1911
2	13	John Palmer Gavit – Writings and Publications 1916-1938
2	14	John Palmer Gavit – Writings 1921-1922
2	15	John Palmer Gavit – ‘Notes from and Odyssey’ 1931
2	16	John Palmer Gavit – ‘Treachery of Sergeant’
2	17	John Palmer Gavit – Century Club Notebook
2	18	John Palmer Gavit – Century Club
2	19	John Palmer Gavit – Framed Announcement of His Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters 1935
2	20-21	John Palmer Gavit – Correspondence with Graham Taylor 1862-1838
2	22	John Palmer Gavit – Miscellaneous Publications by Graham Taylor 1898-1899
2	23	John Palmer Gavit – Publications from ‘The Commons’ 1900- 1913
2	24	John Palmer Gavit – Correspondence Regarding ‘The Commons’ 1900-1920
2	25	John Palmer Gavit – Photographs of Graham Taylor 1922-1934
2	26	John Palmer Gavit – Writing on Graham Taylor 1930-1936
2	27	John Palmer Gavit – Death of Graham Taylor 1938-1939
2	28	John Palmer Gavit – Correspondence with Alton Taylor 1904- 1916
2	29	John Palmer Gavit – Correspondence with Charles Hughes 1907-1936
2	30	John Palmer Gavit – Correspondence with William Howard Taft 1909-1916
2	31	John Palmer Gavit – Correspondence with Thomas Woodrow Wilson 1913-1919

Box 3 -- Gavit Family

3	1	John Palmer Gavit – Correspondence with Alfred Smith 1919- 1928
3	2	John Palmer Gavit – Correspondence with Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1930
3	3	John Palmer Gavit – Miscellaneous Correspondence 1898-1940
3	4-5	John Palmer Gavit – Diary of Correspondence 1907-1944
3	6	John Palmer Gavit - Miscellaneous 1894-1937
3	7	Lucy Lamont Gavit – ‘Thoughts’ 1937
3	8	Lucy Lamont Gavit – 1918-1941

3	9	Lucy Lamont Gavit – ‘Talking Across: A Record of Many Conversations’ 1918-1922
3	10	Joseph Lamont Gavit – Scrapbook Made by Mary Jane Seamans Palmer 1899
3	11	Joseph Lamont Gavit – Military Service 1917-1930
3	12	Helen Montague Gavit – 1924-1926
3	13	Christopher West – 1956-1970
3	14-16	Gavit Family Genealogy Correspondence 1871-1948
3	17	John Palmer Gavit – ‘Of One’s European Ancestry’ 1929
3	18	John Palmer Gavit – Register of Pedigree
3	19	Genealogy Charts and Individual Biographies 1875-1923
3	20	Genealogy Diaries
3	21	Genealogy Related Articles and Clippings 1906-1948
3	22-30	Gavit Family Photographs – 1854-1922

Box 4 – Gavit Family

4	1	Gavit Family Photographs Landscapes 1884-1932
4	2	Gavit Family Christmas Scrapbook – 1844-1873
4	3	Gavit Family Wabeek Creek Photograph and Guest Scrapbook 1907-1922

Box 4 –Erastus Dow Palmer

4	4-6	Erastus Dow Palmer – Account Books 1844-1873
4	7	Erastus Dow Palmer – ‘The Palmer Marbles’ 1856-1953
4	8	Erastus Dow Palmer – ‘Philosophy of the Ideal’ and ‘The Schoolmate’
4	9	Erastus Dow Palmer – Sanitary Bazaar – Records of Paintings and Sculptures 1864
4	10	Erastus Dow Palmer – Correspondence 1874-1896
4	11	Erastus Dow Palmer – Fort Orange Club 1895-1948
4	12	Erastus Dow Palmer – Birthday 1903
4	13	Erastus Dow Palmer – Clippings and Commentary on His Death 1904
4	14-18	Erastus Dow Palmer – Photographs 1842-1898
4	19	Erastus Dow Palmer – Photographs of the Angel at the Sepulcher
4	20	Erastus Dow Palmer – Correspondence, Clippings and Writings Related to Exhibitions and Donations 1910-1984
4	21	Erastus Dow Palmer – Scrapbook of Clippings Related to Exhibitions 1856-1896
4	22	Erastus Dow Palmer – Loose Scrapbook Pages Related to Exhibitions 1876-1897
4	23	Erastus Dow Palmer – Scrapbook of Painting and Engraving

Reference

		Box 4 – Walter Launt Palmer
4	24	Walter Launt Palmer – Scrapbook of Clippings Related to Exhibitions 1860-1925
		Box 5 – Walter Launt Palmer
5	1	Walter Launt Palmer – ‘Mantle of Osiris,’ <u>Scribners Magazine</u> and Other Writings 1894
5	2	Walter Launt Palmer – Scrapbook of His Trip to Japan 1899-1924
5	3	Walter Launt Palmer – Scrapbook of His Trip to Europe 1900-1903
5	4-5	Walter Launt Palmer - Diaries 1908-1915 (photocopies can be found in the Walter Launt Palmer Papers - BV448)
5	6	Walter Launt Palmer – Photographs
5	7	Walter Launt Palmer – Correspondence and Clippings Related to Donations 1981-1985
5	8	Walter Launt Palmer – Scrapbook of Reference Material
5	9	Walter Launt Palmer – Photograph of Albany from the Capital c1880