Benson Lossing Collection, 1853-1889: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number: C1112
Repository: Princeton University. Library. Dept. of Rare Books and Special Collections
Manuscripts Division
One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size: 0.2 linear feet
1 half-size archival box
Language(s) of Material: English
Abstract: Consists of selected correspondence, manuscripts, and printed material of the nineteenth-century American author and illustrator Benson Lossing.
Location: This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
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Contents List
Benson Lossing was an American wood-engraver, author, and editor, whose Dutch ancestors settled in Albany, N.Y. The only formal education he received was three years in the district schools in New York. At age twenty-two he was joint editor and proprietor of the Poughkeepsie Telegraph. He learned the art of engraving on wood, and in 1838 moved to New York City where he established himself as a wood-engraver. From June 1839 to May 1841 he edited and illustrated the weekly Family Magazine. In 1848 Lossing conceived the idea of writing a narrative sketchbook of scenes and objects associated with the American Revolution. Harper & Brothers advanced him the funds to carry out the project, which ultimately took the form of the Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution in two large volumes. In gathering material for this work Lossing traveled more than eight thousand miles in the United States and Canada. The book was published in parts between 1850 and 1852, and gave Lossing a wide reputation. For the next thirty-five years he was a prolific writer and editor of books mostly on popular subjects in American history, including Our Countrymen; or, Brief Memoirs of Eminent Americans (1855), The Hudson, from the Wilderness to the Sea (1866), and A Memorial of Alexander Anderson, M.D., the First Engraver on Wood in America (1872).

The collection consists of selected correspondence, manuscripts, and printed material of Benson Lossing. Correspondents include John W. Barber, regarding Lossing's article on Anderson; William Worth Belknap, Princeton Class of 1852 and U.S. secretary of war, discussing the U.S. War Department's sale of trophies of the war with Great Britain and Mexico; Edward Bierstadt of the Photo Plate Printing Company, explaining to Lossing the gelatin printing process; William J. Bok, including a circular of his Literary Leaves Syndicate with his letter regarding Lossing's future publications; E. J. Carson, praising the Anderson book; John R. Chapin, with a letter and photographs; George W. Childs, founder and editor of the Philadelphia Public Ledger, discussing the printing and publishing of Lossing's book titled The Great Rebellion (thirty-two letters, some with original envelopes, and printed material, two letters by Lossing to Childs); W. J. Linton, with an autograph letter and a prospectus for his book Engraving on Wood; Mrs. Howard (for "G. B. B."), regarding Alexander Anderson; J. W. Osborne of the American Photo-Lithographic Co., introducing his company and explaining his new method of copying by photo-lithography; George Henry Preble, writing about a Schuyler drawing for Lossing's biography about him; Philip C. Rogers; J. Morris of John E. Potter & Company, asking Lossing to write an obituary for Mr. Harper; Alfred Billings Street, New York State Librarian, praising The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution; Mrs. Harriett Tenney, writing about Alexander Anderson; Major General L. Wallace; and Elias J. Whitney, asking Lossing to write a short biography of Anderson for The Child's Paper, which was published by the American Tract Society, accompanied by the original holograph manuscript and a copy of the November 1867 issue of the paper with Lossing's article. Also included is an holograph manuscript signed by Lossing titled "A Magician," about Alexander Anderson, and a draft of a letter to the editor of American historical records at Grosvenor Library in Buffalo, N.Y.
Arranged by accession number, and then alphabetically by correspondent.

Access and Use

Access
The collection is open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information
Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish materials from the collection must be requested from the Associate University Librarian for Rare Books and Special Collections. The library has no information on the status of literary rights in the collection and researchers are responsible for determining any questions of copyright.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Custodial History
The collection was formed as a result of a Departmental practice of combining into one collection material of various accessions relating to a particular person, family, or subject.

Provenance and Acquisition
Letter from George H. Preble was a gift of Michael Papantonio on September 24, 1973.

Processing and Other Information

Preferred Citation
Citations should be as follows: Benson Lossing Collection, Box #, Folder #, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Processing Information
This collection was processed by Dina Britain in June 2006. Finding aid written by Tenley Eakin on June 22, 2006. Folder inventory added by James Clark '14 in 2012.

Encoding
This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2012-07-02T09:23-0400

Descriptive Rules Used
Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings
· Anderson, Alexander, 1775-1870.
· Childs, George William, 1829-1894.
· Authors, American--19th century--Correspondence.
· Editors--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--United States--19th century--Correspondence.
· Illustrators--United States--19th century--Correspondence.
· Publishers and publishing--United States--19th century--Correspondence.
· Wood-engravers--United States--19th century--Correspondence.
· Correspondence--19th century.
· Manuscripts--19th century.
· Prospectuses--19th century.
· Art history
· American history
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