

# Guide to the James Abraham Hillhouse Papers

YCAL MSS 444



by Michael L. Forstrom

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** YCAL MSS 444

**CREATOR:** Hillhouse, James Abraham, 1789-1841

**TITLE:** James Abraham Hillhouse papers

**DATES:** 1804-1844

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 5.42 linear feet (13 boxes) + 1 art

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The James Abraham Hillhouse Papers contain writings and personal papers documenting the literary activities of a member of the prominent New Haven Hillhouse family during the early-to-mid nineteenth century. Writings consist of drafts of plays, essays, poems, and other genres, including notebooks dating from Hillhouse's days as a student at Yale College, covering subjects such as the sermons of Yale President Timothy Dwight and the philosophical lectures of professor Jeremiah Day, who succeeded Dwight in 1817. Other papers include account books, autograph signatures, letters, a drawing, and a death mask of Hillhouse.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.hillhouse>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.hillhouse>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Hillhouse Estate, 1942.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

The James Abraham Hillhouse Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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## Preferred Citation

James Abraham Hillhouse Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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## Processing Information

Preliminary processing was done on the James Abraham Hillhouse papers at an unknown date. During reprocessing of the collection in 2011, the arrangement of writings was preserved in Series I and a small number of personal papers were removed from the general run of titles and consolidated in Series II.

Formerly classed as Za Hillhouse.

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## James Abraham Hillhouse (1789-1841)

James Abraham Hillhouse (September 26, 1789 - January 4, 1841) was born in New Haven, Connecticut, the eldest child of James and Rebecca (Woolsey) Hillhouse. He entered Yale College at the age of 13, but withdrew before the end of his freshman year, and eventually received an A.B. degree with the class of 1808. When his business plans were interrupted by the War of 1812, he relocated to New Haven from Boston, where he had resided for three years after his graduation. In 1819 he visited England, where he first published *Percy's Masque* (1819), a drama based on Bishop Percy's ballad, "The Hermit of Warkworth." Returning to the United States in 1820, Hillhouse engaged in business as a hardware merchant in New York City. In 1822 he married Cornelia Lawrence, the eldest daughter of New York merchant Isaac Lawrence, and the following year returned to New Haven, where he spent the remainder of his life in study and literary pursuits. In 1824, he wrote *Hadad* (1825), a drama based upon the Biblical narrative of Absalom's rebellion. Most of his writings are contained in the volume *Dramas, Discourses, and Other Pieces* (1839).

Summary information taken from "James Abraham Hillhouse." *Dictionary of American Biography*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. *Gale Biography in Context* (accessed 27 January 2011).

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## Scope and Contents

The James Abraham Hillhouse Papers contain writings and personal papers documenting the literary activities of a member of the prominent New Haven Hillhouse family during the early-to-mid nineteenth century. Writings consist of drafts of plays, essays, poems, and other genres, including notebooks dating from Hillhouse's days as a student at Yale College, covering subjects such as the sermons of Yale President Timothy Dwight and the philosophical lectures of professor Jeremiah Day, who succeeded Dwight in 1817. Other papers include account books, autograph signatures, letters, a drawing, and a death mask of Hillhouse.

## **Language(s)**

In English.

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## **Arrangement**

Organized into two series: I. Writings, 1807-1844. II. Personal Papers, 1804-1836.

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## Collection Contents

### Series I: Writings, 1807-1844

5.42 linear feet (13 boxes)

Series I, Writings, consists of drafts of plays, essays, poems, and other genres. There are also numerous notebooks dating from 1807 and 1808, when Hillhouse was a student at Yale College, on such topics as the sermons of Yale President Timothy Dwight and the philosophical lectures of his successor Jeremiah Day.

Arranged alphabetically by title (in quotes) or supplied heading (in brackets).

b. 1	"The Castle on the Danube" 3 folders	undated
b. 1	"Choice of an Era" and "The Value of Poetry" 2 folders	undated
b. 1	[Compositions]	undated
b. 1	"The Convent" 3 folders	undated
b. 2	<i>Demetria: A Tragedy in Five Acts</i> 5 folders	[1814?]-1836, undated
b. 3	<i>Demetria: A Tragedy in Five Acts</i> 4 folders	undated
b. 3	[Disputes]	1807, undated
b. 3	"Disputes of the Class"	undated
b. 4	<i>Dramas, Discourse and Other Pieces</i>	1839, undated
b. 4	<i>Dramas, Discourses and Other Pieces</i> 2 Folders	1839, undated
b. 4	"On the Education of a Poet" 3 folders	[1811], undated
b. 4	"Genevieve of Brabant: A Tragedy in Five Acts" 2 Folders	1810, undated
b. 5	"Genevieve of Brabant: A Tragedy in Five Acts" 4 folders	1810, undated
b. 5	<i>Hadad: A Dramatic Poem</i> 3 folders	1825, undated
b. 6	<i>Hadad: A Dramatic Poem</i> 6 folders	1825, undated
b. 7	<i>Hadad: A Dramatic Poem</i> 6 folders	1825, undated
b. 8	<i>The Judgment, a Vision</i> 5 Folders	1821-1839, undated

b. 8	"Lines Composed on the Mount Late at Night"	1811
b. 8	"The Mastiff and the Coach Dog"	[circa 1828]
b. 8	[Notes and Notebooks] <i>7 folders</i>	1807-[1821?], undated
b. 9	[Notes and Notebooks] <i>5 folders</i>	1807-[1821?], undated
b. 9	"An Oration: On the Utility of the Imagination"	1808
b. 9	[Oration on Lafayette] <i>4 folders</i>	1834
b. 10	[Oration on Lafayette] <i>2 folders</i>	1934
b. 10	[Orations and Extracts from Orations Copied by J. A. Hillhouse]	undated
b. 10	<i>Percy's Masque</i> <i>7 Folders</i>	1844, undated
b. 11	"Phi Beta Kappa Oration" <i>3 folders</i>	1826
b. 11	[Poems] <i>4 folders</i>	[1809]-1838
b. 11	[Prose]	undated
b. 12	"Raynor Smith: a Ballad"	1838
b. 12	<i>Sachem's--Wood</i> <i>2 folders</i>	1838, undated
b. 12	"The Spanish Lady" <i>3 folders</i>	[1810]
b. 12	"The Tandem Drive" <i>2 folders</i>	1836
b. 12	["A true narration of all that happened at the ball..."]	1810, undated
b. 12	"Uncle Sam"	undated
b. 13	"The Uses of Literature" <i>7 folders</i>	undated

**Series II: Personal Papers, 1804-1841***5 folders*

Series II, Personal Papers, contains two early account books, signatures, letters, and a drawing. Letters include six drafts of outgoing letters from Hillhouse to others.

Arranged alphabetically by material type.

b. 13	Account books	1804-1812
b. 13	Autograph signatures	undated
b. 13	Correspondence	[1814?]-1836, undated
b. 13	[Cut-out Profiles of Family Members]	undated
b. 14 (Art)	Death mask bust of Hillhouse	circa 1841
b. 13	Drawing	undated
b. 13	Eyeglass	undated
b. 13	Razor	undated



## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

American literature -- 19th century  
Authors, American -- 19th century -- Archives

### **Geographic Names**

New Haven (Conn.) -- Social life and customs

### **Occupations**

Authors

### **Names**

Day, Jeremiah, 1773-1867  
Dwight, Timothy, 1752-1817  
Hillhouse, James Abraham, 1789-1841

### **Families**

Hillis family

### **Corporate Body**

Yale College (1718-1887)