

Guide to the William A. Larned Papers

MS 948



compiled by Janet Elaine Gertz

June 1983

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 948

CREATOR: Larned, William Augustus, 1806-1862

TITLE: William Augustus Larned papers

DATES: 1827-1861

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.5 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers largely reflect William A. Larned's post as Professor of Rhetoric and English literature (1839-1862) at Yale College. Included are lecture notes, notebooks with freshman prize compositions, grade books, and a student resolution requesting that his portrait be painted (1847). In the small amount of correspondence are five letters from Larned to his aunt, Mrs. John Mason. One is from Salisbury, North Carolina where he taught, and the remainder are from Yale College on his teaching and religious ideas.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0948>

Requesting Instructions

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

By gift and purchase, 1940-1959.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

William Augustus Larned Papers (MS 948). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

William Augustus Larned,

Son of George (B. U. 1792) and Anna (Brown) Larned, was born in Thompson, Conn., June 23, 1806. His grandfather, Gen. Daniel Larned, was a very active and useful citizen, and served in the war of the revolution as an officer of one of the Connecticut regiments, and repeatedly represented his town in the State legislature, and as a member of the convention of 1788, bore a part in the adoption of the Federal Constitution. George Larned, the father of W. A., was by profession a lawyer. William A. entered college at the beginning of Sophomore year in 1823.

The two years after his graduation were spent in teaching in Salisbury, N. C. In 1828 he accepted the appointment of tutor in Yale College, which he resigned in 1831. Near the end of his connection with the college as tutor, and during the great revival of 1831, his attention was first called, in an effectual way, to his spiritual interests. When he came to college, he was, although trained religiously at home, a thoughtless boy, and as his mind grew, he began to think that many of the pretences to religion were delusions, until, by and by, he fell into doubts concerning Christianity itself. Yet, as he mentioned to his friends, the preaching of Dr. Fitch in the college chapel did him great good; such powerful defenses and logical exhibitions of the gospel, as were made by that eminent preacher, were too strong to be resisted by a mind as logical and honest as Larned's. But no thorough alteration in his life and character occurred until that great revival, when he gave to this great subject of personal religion his earnest and serious attention. The result was, that without that intense feeling which some manifest, he gave himself up to the service of God, and in a solemn covenant engaged to be a follower of Christ.

The new views of life, and new religious impressions produced at this time, led him to inquire what work God had for him, and whether his Divine Master was not calling him to preach the gospel. He had chosen the bar for his profession; and during his leisure hours in North Carolina, and afterwards, he made considerable progress in the necessary reading. But now, under a conviction of duty, and in accordance with the advice of friends, especially of Dr. Taylor, he consecrated himself to the work of the ministry and began the study of theology.

Having completed his course in the Seminary at Yale College, he was called to the Congregational church in Milbury, Mass., where he was ordained in May, 1834. He received the call early in the fall of 1833, but he stipulated that he should not be settled before May, 1834. He continued in the pastorate until October, 1835. He performed his work to the profit and acceptance of those who heard him. But his health failing, he was led to leave the people who loved and honored him, and to listen to proposals from Rev. Dr. Beman, of Troy, N. Y., and the Rev. Mr. Kirk, then of Albany, to unite with them in a theological institution at Troy, which they had set up and were conducting. Here he spent a little over three years, chiefly in teaching

the languages of the Old and New Testaments, and in preaching as an assistant to Dr. Beman on Sabbath afternoons. But here again his health languished, and the seminary became embarrassed by the financial disasters of 1837. He therefore, in 1839, sought a temporary retirement from his labors, and chose New Haven for his refuge, where during some months, he gave himself up to study, particularly to the study of the Anglo-Saxon. In the fall of 1839, when the chair of Rhetoric and English Literature was made vacant by the transfer of Prof. Goodrich to the theological department, Larned was chosen his successor by the corporation of Yale College, in which office he continued until his death which occurred suddenly, on the 3d day of February, 1862. When "The New Englander" was first started, in 1843, he was one of a committee to superintend its interests, and often contributed to its pages, and during the years 1854-5 was its editor.

He had a sound judgement in regard to the validity of arguments, the arrangement of topics, the fitness of style to express the desired thought. He hated that vicious rhetoric which aims at display, which is fond of redundant words, instead of controlling and ever pruning off whatever has no near connection with the argument and the progress of the thought. Hence his taste was of great use to the college, for it had truth and honesty for its foundation. As a writer, he was characterized by a straight forward, simple, but somewhat philosophic style.

The circumstances of his last walk, on which he met his death--as discovered since that event--are full of a peculiar and precious interest. He was uncommonly systematic in his exercise, and had set out from home on the afternoon of the 3d of February, 1862, for this purpose, taking the direction towards the house of a friend, a little out of town. In the absence of the family, the house was in charge of a poor woman, in whose welfare and that of her children, he had long taken an interest. Here he staid about half an hour, spending the time chiefly in hearing the Sunday School lessons which their teacher had set them. While here, he complained of a pain in the head, remarking that he had it when he left home, and that it was no better for the walk. This head-ache was the precursor of an attack upon the brain, which caused him while returning home, to fall to the ground on the track of the railroad near Prospect street, which took away his consciousness and power of utterance almost immediately, and closed his life about six o'clock of the same afternoon." --Abbreviated from Pres. Woolsey's "Sketch of the Life of Prof. Larned," in the *New Englander*, April, 1862.

About thirty articles in the *New Englander*, mostly reviews, are the productions of his pen, besides some books for his college classes. He married Miss Irene Battell, daughter of Joseph Battell, Esp., of Norfolk, Conn. They had no children.

(Taken from *A Biographical Sketch of the Class of 1826, Yale College*, 1866, pp. 53-57.)

Scope and Contents

These papers of William Augustus Larned largely concern his Yale career. There are seven letters from Larned in the collection: one to Hezekiah Howe concerning money owed him by Larned; five to Larned's aunt, Mrs. John Mason, about his school in Salisbury, North Carolina, his study and teaching at Yale, his religious faith and clerical duties; and one letter to Rev. Robinson informing him of his appointment to the examining committee for Yale examinations. The remainder of the collection consists of Yale teaching materials and student papers: lectures, essays, and notes on English and Greek language, literature, and history; notebooks on the theological lectures of Josiah W. Gibbs and other subjects; grade books; and a students' resolution of 1847 announcing their desire for a portrait of Larned.

These papers were acquired by Yale through a series of gifts and purchases from a variety of sources from the 1940s through the 1960s.

Collection Contents

Letters

b. 1, f. 1	ALS to Hezekiah Howe	1834 July 1
b. 1, f. 1	5 ALS to Mrs. John Mason	1827-1838
b. 1, f. 1	ALS to Rev. Robinson	1844 March 24
b. 1, f. 2	Lectures and essays on Greek history and literature	undated
b. 1, f. 3	Lectures on language	undated

Notes

b. 1, f. 4	English language and literature	undated
b. 1, f. 5	Greek history and literature	undated
b. 1, f. 6	Literature and language	undated
b. 1, f. 7	Miscellaneous	1840, 1842, 1850, undated

Notebooks

b. 1, f. 8	Lectures of Josiah W. Gibbs	1834
b. 1, f. 8	Freshman prize compositions	1847-1861
b. 1, f. 8	Chronology	undated
b. 1, f. 9	Grade books	1839-1840, undated
b. 1, f. 9	Student resolution	1847

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

Clergy
Educators
Literature -- History and criticism
Religious thought -- 19th century

Geographic Names

Salisbury (N.C.)

Names

Larned, William Augustus, 1806-1862

Corporate Bodies

Yale University. Department of English
Yale University -- Faculty