

**The New York Public Library - Stephen A. Schwarzman Building
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Guide to the

A.H. Green papers

1790-1923 (bulk 1832-1903)

MsCol 1232

Compiled by Kit Messick, March 2011

Summary

Creator: Green, A. H. (Andrew Haswell), 1820-1903

Title: A.H. Green papers, 1790-1923 (bulk 1832-1903)

Size: 3.15 linear feet (8 boxes)

Source: Purchased from R.W. Oliver's, 2010

Abstract: Andrew Haswell Green (1820-1903) was a New York City lawyer, city planner, civic leader, and reformer widely referred to as both "the father of Central Park" and "the father of greater New York." The A.H. Green papers are comprised predominantly of family correspondence. Also included are photographs; memorials, tributes and funeral ephemera; a travel diary; and a small quantity of professional papers. The collection should not be considered an extensive source of information on Green's career.

Access: Advance notice required. Apply at <http://www.nypl.org/mssref>

Preferred citation: A.H. Green papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Custodial history

Purchased at auction from Green family estate.

Related collections

Andrew H. Green letters, 1870-1882. Kroch Library Rare & Manuscripts, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

Andrew Haswell Green collection. New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West, New York, NY

Creator history

Andrew Haswell Green (1820-1903) was a New York City lawyer, city planner, civic leader and reformer widely referred to as both "the father of Central Park" and "the father of greater New York." One of eleven children born to William Elijah Green in Worcester, Massachusetts, Andrew Haswell Green left home for New York City at the age of fifteen, where he worked as an errand boy first to a jeweler, and then to a cloth importer. Unsatisfied by the dearth of fulfilling employment opportunities, he briefly left the city to manage a sugar plantation in Trinidad. Upon his return, he undertook the study of law mentored by Samuel J. Tilden, with whom he developed a lasting personal and professional relationship. In 1854, Green was elected to the New York City Board of Education. By 1857, he had been named head of the Central Park Commission, and through his influence the "greensward plan" of Frederick Law Olmstead

and Calvert Vaux was implemented. Green expanded the role of the Parks Commission, which later created such city landmarks as Riverside Park, Morningside Park, and Columbus Circle.

Green was appointed city comptroller in 1870 as his friend and mentor Samuel Tilden exposed the graft and fraud of Tammany Hall under William M. "Boss" Tweed. He retained the position until 1876, restoring order to the city's finances, even using his own personal credit as collateral to obtain the funds necessary to cover the city payroll.

Upon Tilden's death in 1886, Green served as an executor of the Tilden estate, much of which had been earmarked for the creation of a public reading room. Green consolidated the Tilden Trust with the Astor and Lenox libraries to create the New York Public Library.

As early as 1868, Green had publicly promoted the idea of unifying Manhattan and the larger metropolitan area, but his plan had not been widely supported. After the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883, the Washington Bridge in 1889, and the annexation of land north of Manhattan in what is now the Bronx, public and political opinion began to sway in favor of unification. The New York State legislature created a commission to investigate the issue and placed Green at its head. In 1896, Green's measure was approved, and the five boroughs of New York City were officially consolidated on January 1, 1898.

A. H. Green was murdered at his home in 1903, at the age of 83. Cornelius Williams mistook Green for a man named John R. Platt, whom he believed to be having an affair with his mistress, and shot Green five times at close range. Williams was found by the courts to be insane at the time of the crime.

Scope and content note

The A.H. Green papers consist predominantly of family correspondence. The content is almost exclusively limited to quotidian matters, particularly those surrounding the management of the family's estate, Green Hill, in Worcester, Massachusetts, and contains little discussion of matters beyond the personal sphere.

A significant quantity of letters from Green to his father, William, are present. A scant few responses from William to Andrew are contained here, as are a limited number of related letters from Andrew's brother John, often appended directly to Andrew's letters, during his brief tenure in New York City. Early letters from Green to his father describe his journey to and arrival in New York City, and his employment there. Many letters during the 1830s make reference to the family's debts and Andrew's hope of settling them. "It may take some time to do this," he remarks in an 1838 letter, "[but] it is the thing that lays next to my heart to see you once again above board, independent and happy."

The majority of the letters are to Andrew from his siblings, most prominently his sisters Lucy Merriam Green and Julia Elizabeth Green; and his brothers Oliver Bourne Green and John Plimpton Green. While some letters from Andrew to various family members are present, the bulk of the letters are those received by Green. One folder of letters to Green from his cousins Lydia, Daniel, and Oliver Plimpton discusses family matters and notes on the happenings in and around their home in Southbridge, Massachusetts.

The profound effect of Green's unexpected death on both private and prominent citizens is documented in five folders of condolence letters and telegrams, most of which were addressed to sisters Lucy and Mary.

One folder of Green's general correspondence contains only three letters: a response to the death of his father, who died in 1865 at the age of 89; a copy of the 1868 report of the Commissioners of the Central Park Committee; and a 1900 letter from Lyman S. Andrews praising Green's civic service. Andrews, who served initially as Green's secretary and later as the executor of his estate, was later arrested for forging a check under the name of Green's nephew.

Personal miscellany within the collection includes notebooks, photographs, tributes and memorials, funeral ephemera, and miscellaneous documents. A booklet produced in 1860 by the Central Park Commission, *Ordinances for the Government and Regulation of the Central Park*, is heavily annotated by Green, including lists of pending tasks for himself, Vaux, Ignaz Pilat, William H. Grant and others, relating to the creation and maintenance of the park. An 1868 diary documents a trip to Europe undertaken with brother-in-law Carl Knudsen, detailing their activities and the lengths of various legs of their journey, and providing a thorough account of all related expenses. Miscellaneous documents include an advertising pamphlet for the Misses Green School for Young Ladies run by his sisters Lucy and Mary; receipts; genealogical research; a list of "rules for family" likely created for the students at the Misses Green School; and several handwritten notes.

Only a few photographs are present; an 1895 image of Green turning the first sod for the ill-fated North River Bridge project, and proofs of pictures of his sisters Lucy and Mary Green.

The professional papers contained in this collection cannot be considered an exhaustive source of information relating to Green's career; they comprise the smallest portion of the collection as a whole. Included are drafts and memoranda of proposed amendments to the New York State Constitution; letters to Green on taxation, women's suffrage, charities, and other topics; and papers relating to Green's service as delegate to the New York State Constitutional Convention of 1894.

Key terms

Subjects

Central Park (New York, N.Y.) -- History -- 19th century
Charities -- New York (State) -- New York
Constitutional amendments -- New York (State)
Constitutional conventions -- New York (State)
Taxation -- New York (State) -- New York
Women -- Suffrage

Occupations

Public officers

Places

Europe -- Description and travel -- 19th century
New York (N.Y.) -- Politics and government -- To 1898
New York (State) -- Politics and government -- 1865-1950

Names

Green, A. H. (Andrew Haswell), 1820-1903
Green, John Plimpton, b. 1819
Green, Julia Elizabeth, 1816-1880
Green, Lucy Merriam, 1810-1893
Green, Lydia Plympton, 1824-1869
Green, Mary Ruggles, b. 1814
Green, Oliver Bourne, b. 1826
Green, William E., 1777-1865

Special formats

Diaries

Photographs

Container list

Correspondence, 1790-1923

Letters to William E. Green, 1832-1866

- b.1 f.1 1832-1838
- b.1 f.2 1845-1849
- b.1 f.3 1850-1866, undated
- b.1 f.4 Plimpton family letters to A.H. Green, 1836-1890

Family correspondence, 1790-1923

- b.1 f.5 1790-1839
- b.1 f.6 1840-1849
- b.2 f.2 1850-1853
- b.2 f.3 1854
- b.2 f.4 1855-1859
- b.2 f.5 1860-1863
- b.2 f.6 1864-1865
- b.2 f.7 1866 January-June
- b.2 f.8 1866 July-December
- b.3 f.1 1867-1868
- b.3 f.2 1869
- b.3 f.3 1870-1872
- b.3 f.4 1873
- b.3 f.5 1874-1876
- b.3 f.6 1877-1878
- b.3 f.7 1879
- b.3 f.8 1880
- b.3 f.9 1881
- b.4 f.1 1882 January-July
- b.4 f.2 1882 August-December
- b.4 f.3 1883 January-April
- b.4 f.4 1883 May-December
- b.4 f.5 1884 January-May
- b.4 f.6 1884 June-December
- b.4 f.7 1885 January-May
- b.5 f.1 1885 June-December
- b.5 f.2 1886 January-July
- b.5 f.3 1886 August-December
- b.5 f.4 1887
- b.5 f.5 1888 January-July
- b.5 f.6 1888 August-December
- b.5 f.7 1889 January-July
- b.6 f.1 1889 August-December
- b.6 f.2 1890-1923
- b.6 f.3 Undated

Correspondence (cont.)

Family correspondence (cont.)

- b.6 f.4-6 Condolence letters, 1903
- b.7 f.1-2 Condolence letters, 1903
- b.7 f.3 General correspondence, 1865-1900
- b.7 f.4 *Ordinances for the Government and Regulation of the Central Park*, annotated, 1860

Personal miscellany, 1860-1905

- b.7 f.5 Travel diary, 1868
- b.7 f.6 Memorials and tributes, 1903-1904
- b.7 f.7 Funeral ephemera, 1903
- b.7 f.8 Miscellaneous documents, 1816-1905, undated
- b.7 f.9 Photographs, 1895, undated
- b.8 Professional papers, 1894 (Use microfilm: *ZL-263)