

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
RARE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS DIVISION
ACCESSION SHEET

Accession # *86 M 30

Location ^{Annex} 3-9-4/6
Clayton Case

Title Gordon Lester Ford. Papers

Approximate inclusive dates 1830-91 Bulk dates: 1850's-1860's

Date of receipt ca. 1902

Received from The family of Gordon L.
Ford

Volume on arrival 5 cartons, 12 boxes, 5 vols., 1 folder

Number of boxes (after reboxing) 16 AB, 3 ½AB, 1 RC

Condition Good

Restrictions None

Description Gordon Lester Ford (1823-91) was born in Lebanon, Conn., one of several children of Lester and Eliza (Burnham) Ford. While still a child he was sent to New York where he became employed in the mercantile firm of his uncle, Gordon Burnham. He showed a precocious talent for business, became an accountant, and found employment (1847) as chief clerk, and later as deputy marshall in the office of the U.S. Marshall for the Southern District of New York. In 1850 he was admitted to the bar. He practised law for much of his life at times in partnership with Alexander Bliss and Francis Andrew March (1825-1911). His main interests, however, appear to have been business and real estate investment. He was president (1852-56) of the New London, Willimantic & Palmer Railroad, and for a short time (1883) of the Brooklyn & Coney Island Railroad, and he was a director or investor in several railroads including including the Morris & Essex Railroad, the New York & Harlem Railroad, and the Madison & Indianapolis Railroad. He also served as collector (1869-72) of internal revenue for the third collection district, as commissioner of deeds, and as business manager of the N.Y. Tribune. In 1863 he helped to found the Brooklyn Daily Union, a newspaper devoted to supporting the Union cause during the Civil War. Following his marriage (1853) to Emily Ellsworth Fowler, a granddaughter of Noah Webster, he settled in Brooklyn. He was a founder of the Brooklyn Academy of Music and of the Brooklyn Art Association. Ford was an avid collector of books and manuscripts relating to

Special Formats Photographs Maps Audio Tapes Films Graphics
 Artifacts Machine-readable records
 Other (list) _____

Temporary catalog card added entries

Accountants' papers
Brooklyn Daily Union
Business
Commissioners of deeds
Family records
(cont'd.)

Accessioned by Julia Todd John Stinson

Date April 21, 1986

ACCESSION SHEET

Gordon L. Ford Papers

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Description (cont'd.)

to America and he assembled what was regarded as one of the largest private collections of Americana in the world. After his death his collection became part of the holdings of the New York Public Library. Two of his children Worthington C. Ford (1858-1941) and Paul Leicester Ford (1865-1902) became prominent authors.

The bulk of the papers consist of correspondence, legal and business papers and account books. The correspondence is separated into general and family, both in chronological order (by year only). The general correspondence (1842-91) consists of in-coming letters, and drafts and letterbooks of out-going letters. The correspondence reflects Ford's activities as a lawyer and businessman, his real estate and railroad investments, his presidency of the New London, Willimantic & Palmer Railroad, his work as deputy U.S. Marshall, as collector of internal revenue and as commissioner of deeds. Some correspondence concerns his autograph collecting. His civic and social life is reflected to a lesser degree. Correspondents include Alexander Bliss, Gordon Burnham, William C. Ford (who acted as his office manager), William C. Fowler, Henry J. Gardner, G & C Merriam (publishers), Charles Nordhoff and Whitelaw Reid. Some family correspondence is scattered throughout the general correspondence. The family correspondence (1830-91) includes early letter by Ford to his parents after his arrival in New York City. Included also is correspondence of Ford with his wife Emily Ellsworth Ford, his brothers and sisters especially Marcia Ford, and his children, and various members of the Burnham family. The legal papers (1837-93) include case records, a letterbook, law diaries and law ledgers. The case records concern real estate in Brooklyn (Ford vs. Sampson) and the bankruptcy of Ellis Bartlett, a New York merchant who assigned his assets to Ford for the purpose of settling with his creditors. The letterbook (1851-52) contains correspondence of Ford & March and Ford & Bliss. The law diaries and ledgers contain notes of work performed, letters received/sent, court appointments, bank balances, and some business and household expenses, and records of actions taken in cases litigated in various courts. The business papers (1839-91) include insurance papers, accounts, bills & receipts, promissory notes, indentures, pocket-size account books, and other papers in chronological order. The account books (1844-92) include ledgers reflecting Ford's complex legal and business transactions and accounts with various persons including family members. There are also papers (1869-71) relative to Ford's collectorship of internal revenue consisting mainly of correspondence with the commissioner of internal revenue at Wash., D.C.; and papers (1863-69) relative to the Brooklyn Daily Union including correspondence of Ford and Simeon Baldwin Chittenden with the Associated Press and others, articles of agreement and other papers. There are also a few miscellaneous papers including membership certificates, invitations, calling cards and printed ephemera. Ford's certificates of appointment as commissioner of deeds (including one certificate signed by Brigham Young) have been filed in the charter case.

Gordon Lester Ford Papers

Container list

Container No.

	General correspondence (1842-91)
1	1842-65
2	1866-80
3	1881-91
4	Henry J. Gardner (1872-91); Charles Nordhoff (1863-88); Whitelaw Reid (1873-75)
5	Letterbooks (1844-62)
5-6	Family correspondence (1830-91)
7-9	Legal papers (1837-93)
10-11	Business papers (1839-91)
12-13	Account books (1844-92)
14	Papers as collector of internal revenue (1869-71)
15	Papers relating to the Brooklyn Daily Union (1863-69)
16-17	Miscellaneous papers
18-19	Printed matter
20	Unsorted papers
(charter case)	Certificates of appointment as commissioner of deeds