

MS-182: Coombs-Learned Family Papers

Collection Number: MS-182

Title: Coombs-Learned Family Papers

Dates: 1819-1985

Creators: Coombs, Palmer Bennett, 1893-1959; Coombs, Genevieve Learned, 1897-1988; Coombs Family; Learned Family

Summary/Abstract:

A collection of 19th and early 20th century family papers of the Coombs and Learned extended families who lived in Michigan, California, and Ohio. Papers include extensive family correspondence, diaries, business and financial records, and over 300 photographs. Noteworthy among the contents are several letters written by President James A. Garfield to a family member when he was a young man, as well as Palmer Coombs' World War I diaries and papers.

Quantity/Physical Description: 6.5 linear feet

Language(s): English

Repository:

Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-0001, (937) 775-2092

Restrictions on Access: There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection.

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Preferred Citation:

[Box Number, Folder Number], MS-182, Coombs-Learned Family Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio

Acquisition:

The Coombs-Learned Family Papers were donated to Wright State University Special Collections and Archives by Charles Palmer Coombs, son of Palmer B. and Genevieve (Learned) Coombs, in December 1986.

Custodial History:

The Coombs-Learned Papers were accumulated by Palmer B. Coombs and his wife Genevieve (Learned) Coombs over many years. The papers were compiled by Marcia (Sugg) Coombs, wife of Charles P. Coombs, of Dayton, Ohio, after she discovered the papers in the attic of her

mother-in-law Genevieve (Learned) Coombs's house at 2005 Waite Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1974. Mrs. Coombs then brought the collection to her home in Dayton, Ohio, and contacted Dr. Patrick Nolan about the collection shortly after that. However, it was not donated to Wright State University Special Collections and Archives until 1986.

Alternative Form Available:

Portions of this collection, including Palmer B. Coombs' World War I Materials (Series III), have been digitized and can be viewed online in Wright State University's Campus Online Repository (CORE Scholar): http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/special_ms182/.

Processed by: Archives staff, December 2002; revised, November 2010 and April 2014.

Arrangement:

The collection is arranged into 6 series:

Series I: Business Records

Series II: Correspondence

Sub-series II-A: Coombs Family Correspondence

Sub-series II-B: Learned Family Correspondence

Sub-series II-C: Envelopes

Series III: Palmer Coombs World War I Materials

Series IV: Diaries

Series V: Miscellaneous Family Papers and Records

Series VI: Photographs

Biographical/Historical Note

The Coombs and Learned families were joined when Palmer Bennett Coombs married Genevieve Learned on September 6, 1924, in Pointe Aux Barques, Huron County, Michigan.

Palmer Bennett Coombs was born August 23, 1893, in Sioux City, Iowa, the youngest child of John Charles Coombs (1842-1914) and Edith (Manvel) Coombs (1854-1893). Palmer's mother died when he was two days old from childbirth complications. For much of his childhood, Palmer's family lived in Los Angeles, California. Palmer later moved to Michigan.

At Ann Arbor, Michigan, on April 6, 1917, the day that the United States formally entered World War I, Palmer enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He trained at Camp Paul Jones (IL), Wakefield Naval Rifle Range (VA), Mount Pleasant (SC), Camp Logan (IL), and Sandy Hook (NJ) before being sent overseas. He served in France at Saint-Nazaire, assembling gun mounts and cars, as well as at Nuisement, Soissons, Verdun, and St. Bernard Woods. He was released from the service on January 8, 1919.

In the early 1920s, prior to his marriage, Palmer lived at the YMCA in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and was employed as a foundry manager, an occupation he held for most of his life.

Genevieve Learned was born January 27, 1897, in Renfro, Alabama, a daughter of Edward Raymond Learned (1868-1936) and Josephine (Farrell) Learned (1869-1943). For a time,

Genevieve lived and attended school in Eugene, Oregon. She later returned to Michigan, where her family had been from. As a young woman, Genevieve was a teacher.

Palmer and Genevieve were married on September 6, 1924, after having known each other at least 12 years. They made their life together in Kalamazoo. By 1930, they were already living in the home at 2005 Waite Avenue, where this collection was found in 1974. Palmer had a long and successful career at Riverside Foundry & Galvanizing Company, of which he eventually became president.

Palmer B. Coombs died July 13, 1959, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Genevieve died March 20, 1988, in Los Angeles, California. They were survived by two sons, Manvel (born about 1926) and Charles P. (born 1931).

Scope and Content

The Coombs-Learned Family Papers consist of 19th and early 20th century family papers created by Palmer Coombs and his wife Genevieve (Learned) Coombs, as well as by their ancestors and extended families, who primarily lived in Michigan, California, and Ohio. The collection is arranged into 6 series.

Series I, Business Records, consists of financial papers, business records, and deeds created by George Palmer, John C. Coombs, Jonas Learned, and the Letcher family, dated between 1840 and 1914.

Series II: Correspondence, the largest series in the collection, consists of correspondence received by family members from one another as well as from other individuals, dated between 1819 and 1957. This series also contains a few photographs, if those photographs were enclosed in a piece of correspondence. This series is divided into three sub-series: Sub-series I-A: Coombs Family, Sub-series II-B: Learned Family, and Sub-series II-C: Envelopes.

Sub-series II-A: Coombs Family Correspondence, consists of correspondence received by members of the Coombs family, dated between 1872 and 1957. Most of the letters are addressed to Genevieve Learned or to her grandparents Jonas and Louise Learned. Most notable in this series are letters written by future president James A. Garfield from 1855-1862. Garfield was a family friend of Charles G. and Maria Learned (Genevieve Learned's great-grandparents), and Louise Letcher, who married Charles and Maria's son Jonas Learned, was a relative of Garfield's. Correspondence is organized according to the correspondents involved, as well as chronologically.

Sub-series II-B: Learned Family Correspondence, consists of correspondence received by members of the Learned family, dated between 1855 and 1949. Most of the letters are addressed to Palmer Coombs. Correspondence is organized according to the correspondents involved, as well as chronologically.

Sub-series II-C: Envelopes, consists of the original envelopes from correspondence in both Sub-series II-A and Sub-series II-B. Materials in this sub-series are organized chronologically and date between 1819 and 1951.

Series III: Palmer Coombs World War I Materials, consists of three diaries and a handful of other miscellaneous papers written by Palmer B. Coombs during his World War I service, from 1917 to 1919. The diaries in this series have been digitized and can be viewed online in Wright State University's Campus Online Repository (CORE Scholar):
http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/special_ms182/.

Series IV: Diaries, consists of 3 diaries with dates between 1861 and 1921. Two of the diaries were written by Louise (Letcher) Learned in 1861-1864 and 1903-1905. The third was written by Genevieve (Learned) Coombs from 1919-1921.

Series V: Miscellaneous Family Papers and Records, consists of various family papers pertaining to members of both the Coombs and Learned families, including a law license, art book, naturalization papers, military papers, essay books, a recipe book, and other materials.

Series VI: Photographs, consists of approximately 300 photographs. Most of the photographs are undated and unidentified. They appear to date from about 1870 to about 1950, with the bulk being from the early 20th century. A few of the photographs appear to depict soldiers overseas.

Subject Terms

Persons/Families

Coombs, Palmer Bennett, 1893-1959
Coombs, Genevieve Learned, 1897-1988
Coombs family
Learned family
Letcher family
Garfield, James A. (James Abram), 1831-1881

Places

Kalamazoo (Mich.)
Port Austin (Mich.)

Subjects (General)

Coombs family -- Manuscripts
Garfield, James A. (James Abram), 1831-1881 -- Correspondence
Learned family -- Manuscripts
World War, 1914-1918 -- France
World War, 1914-1918 -- Naval operations

Material Types

Business records
Correspondence

Diaries
 Financial records
 Genealogies
 Photographs

Collection Inventory

Box	File	Description	Date
Series I: Business Records			1840-1914
1	1	George Palmer: Financial records, business papers, deeds (1 of 5)	Circa 1840-1870
1	2	George Palmer: Financial records, business papers, deeds (2 of 5)	Circa 1840-1870
1	3	George Palmer: Financial records, business papers, deeds (3 of 5)	Circa 1840-1870
1	4	George Palmer: Financial records, business papers, deeds (4 of 5)	Circa 1840-1870
1	5	George Palmer: Financial records, business papers, deeds (5 of 5)	Circa 1840-1870
1	6	John C. Coombs: Financial records, business papers, deed	1866-1914
1	7	Jonas Learned: Financial records, business papers	1864-1893
1	8	Letcher Family: Financial records, business papers	1877-1890
Series II: Correspondence			1819-1957
Subseries II-A: Coombs Family			1872-1957
2	1	Edith Coombs to Ellen Manvel	1872-1893
2	2	From Edith Coombs	Undated
2	3	Edith Coombs to John Coombs	1876-1879
2	4	John Coombs to Edith Coombs	1875-1898
2	5	To John Coombs	1863-1914
2	6	Manvel Coombs to Florence Coombs Sutton	1907-1919
3	1	Helen Wiegard to Palmer Coombs	1912
3	2	Helen Wiegard to Palmer Coombs	1913
3	3	Helen Wiegard to Palmer Coombs	1914 Jan.-Oct.
3	4	Helen Wiegard to Palmer Coombs	1914 Nov.-Dec.
3	5	Helen Wiegard to Palmer Coombs	1915 Jan.-Feb.
3	6	Helen Wiegard to Palmer Coombs	1915 Mar.-May
3	7	Helen Wiegard to Palmer Coombs	1915 June-Sept.
4	1	Genevieve Learned to Palmer Coombs	1912-1923 June
4	2	Genevieve Learned to Palmer Coombs	1923 July-Aug.
4	3	Genevieve Learned to Palmer Coombs	1923 Sept.-Oct.
4	4	Genevieve Learned to Palmer Coombs	1923 Nov.-Dec.
4	5	Genevieve Learned to Palmer Coombs	1924 Jan.-Feb.

Box	File	Description	Date
4	6	Genevieve Learned to Palmer Coombs	1924 Mar.-May
4	7	Genevieve Learned to Palmer Coombs	1924 June-Aug.
4	8	Genevieve Learned to Palmer Coombs	Undated
4	9	Palmer Coombs to Misc. Family Friends	1914-1918
4	10	Palmer Coombs to Florence Coombs Sutton	1914-1919
5	1	Misc. to Palmer Coombs	1914-1957
5	2	Catherine (S. F.) to Palmer Coombs	1918-1919
5	3	Charlotte (?) to Palmer Coombs	1920-1922
5	4	Marion Handley to Palmer Coombs	1921-1922
5	5	Mickey Smith to Palmer Coombs	1922-1923
5	6	Florence Sutton to Palmer Coombs	1920-1950
5	7	Helen Coombs to Palmer Coombs	1921-1950
5	8	Edith Coombs Lykken to Palmer Coombs	1921-1950
5	9	Ernest Sutton to Palmer Coombs	1937-1938
5	10	Manvel Coombs to Palmer Coombs	1942-1951
Subseries II-B: Learned Family			1855-1949
6	1	Ebenezer Raymond to Maria Raymond Learned	1855
6	2	From James Garfield	1855-1862
6	3	Maria to Charles Learned	1859
6	4	From Rebecca Selleck	1857-1869
6	5	Maria to Jonas Learned	1857-1864
6	6	Misc. to J. R. & Louise Learned	1858-1922
6	7	Jonas R. Learned to Louise Learned	1860-1898
6	8	From Louise to Jonas	1864
6	9	Charles Learned to Jonas Learned	1864
6	10	Rebecca Selleck to Learneds	1874-1904
6	11	Rebecca Selleck to Learneds	Undated
7	1	Louise Learned to Jonas Learned	1858-1859
7	2	Louise Learned to Jonas Learned	1860-1861
7	3	Louise Learned to Jonas Learned	1862-1863
7	4	Louise Learned to Jonas Learned	1864-1868
7	5	Louise Learned to Jonas Learned	Undated
8	1	Jonas Learned to G. C. Learned	1863, 1878
8	2	To Jonas Learned	1857-1875
8	3	To Jonas Learned	1884-1911
8	4	Fred Letcher to Jonas Learned	1898-1916
8	5	Fred Letcher to Mr. & Mrs. Learned	1909-1916
8	6	To Louise Learned	1873-1921
8	7	Maria Learned to Louise Learned	1873-1886
8	8	Matilda Letcher to Louise Learned	1888-1891
8	9	Misc. Letcher Correspondence	1892-1919
8	10	Wm. Letcher to Edward Learned	1930
8	11	Jonas & Louise Learned to Chas Learned II	1881-1919

Box	File	Description	Date
8	12	Louise Learned to Edward Learned	1885-1886
8	13	Louise Learned to Will Learned	1906
8	14	E. R. Learned to Josephine Learned	1890-1895
8	15	To Josephine Learned	1891-1942
8	16	Jonas Learned to Edward & Josephine Learned	1893-1895
8	17	Genevieve Learned to Josephine Learned	1916-1940
8	18	Louise Learned to Genevieve Learned	1918-1919
8	19	Josephine Learned to Genevieve Learned	1920-1923
8	20	Will Learned to Mr. & Mrs. J. R. Learned	1905-1913
8	21	To Charles Learned	1918-1938
8	22	Norda Rae S. to Chas Learned	1919
8	23	G. Whalley to Chas Learned	1921
8	24	Misc. Correspondence	Undated
8	25	Christmas Cards	Undated
9	1	Cort Sayers to Genevieve Learned	1912-1914
9	2	Cort Sayers to Genevieve Learned	1915
9	3	Cort Sayers to Genevieve Learned	1916
9	4	Cort Sayers to Genevieve Learned	1917
9	5	Cort Sayers to Genevieve Learned	Undated
9	6	Frank Wallace to Genevieve Learned	1916-1919
9	7	Rollen Kerr to Genevieve Learned	1916-1919
9	8	Don T. to Genevieve Learned	1917-1921
9	9	Warren Babcock to Genevieve Learned	1918-1924
9	10	Harry Carpenter to Genevieve Learned	1920-1921
9	11	Stuart Irvine to Genevieve Learned	1922-1923
9	12	Misc. to Genevieve Learned	1918-1949
10	1	Palmer B. Coombs to Genevieve Learned	1922-1923
10	2	Palmer B. Coombs to Genevieve Learned	1923 Aug.-Sept.
10	3	Palmer B. Coombs to Genevieve Learned	1923 Oct.-Dec.
10	4	Palmer B. Coombs to Genevieve Learned	1924 Jan.-Mar.
10	5	Palmer B. Coombs to Genevieve Learned	1924 Apr.-Jun.
10	6	Palmer B. Coombs to Genevieve Learned	1924 July
10	7	Palmer B. Coombs to Genevieve Learned	1924 August
10	8	Palmer B. Coombs to Genevieve Learned	1924 Sep.-Dec.
Subseries II-C: Envelopes			1819-1951
10A	1	Envelopes	1819-1909
10A	2	Envelopes	1910-1914 Mar.
10A	3	Envelopes	1914 Apr.-Dec.
10A	4	Envelopes	1915 Jan.
10A	5	Envelopes	1915 Feb.-Mar.
10A	6	Envelopes	1915 Apr.-May
10A	7	Envelopes	1915 June-Sept.
10A	8	Envelopes	1917-1918

Box	File	Description	Date
10A	9	Envelopes	1919 Jan.-May
10A	10	Envelopes	1919 June-Dec.
10A	11	Envelopes	1920
10A	12	Envelopes	1921
10A	13	Envelopes	1922-1923
10A	14	Envelopes	1924-1939
10A	15	Envelopes	1940-1951
10A	16	Envelopes	Undated
Series III: Palmer Coombs World War I Materials			1917-1922, 1940
11	1	Diaries	1917 Apr.-Aug.
11	2	Diaries	1918 Mar. - 1919 Jan.
11	3	Misc. Papers	Circa 1917-1922, 1940
Series IV: Diaries			1861-1921
11	4	Louise Letcher (2 items)	1861-1864, 1903-1905
11	5	Genevieve Learned (1 item)	1919-1921
Series V: Miscellaneous Family Papers and Records			1857-1940, 1985
11	6	Wm. Letcher's Law License	1857
11	7	Western Reserve Eclectic Institute Programs	1858-1860
11	8	Jonas Learned Time Book	1865-1870
11	9	Palmer Coombs Kindergarten Art Book	1898-1899
11	10	John Coombs Naturalization Papers	1888
11	11	Homer Manvel's Military Papers	1862-1916
11	12	Census return – Josephine Learned	1940
11	13	Learned – Letcher Marriage Certificate	1864
11	14	Louise Letcher Learned Obituary	1924
11	15	Essays	Undated
11	16	Louise Letcher Essays	Undated
11	17	Jonas R. Learned Essay	Undated
11	18	Recipe Book	Undated
11	19	Savings Bond Stamp Book	Undated
11	20	Kalamazoo College Receipt	1919
11	21	Innsider Magazine	1985
Series VI: Photographs			Circa 1870-1950
12		Photographs	Circa 1870-1950