Overview of the Collection
Title: Baldwin Family Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1779-1886
Bulk dates: 1803-1865
Collection Number: mssBN 1-475
Creator: Baldwin (Family)
Extent: 475 pieces in 8 boxes.
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2129
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URL: http://www.huntington.org

Abstract: This collection chiefly contains correspondence of the family of Ruth Baldwin Barlow (1756-1818) and her husband, poet and United States diplomat Joel Barlow (1754-1812), with the bulk dating from 1803-1865. The letters discuss Baldwin family affairs, social life in New Haven, Connecticut, and Washington, D.C., travels in Switzerland, Italy, and France, and contain only occasional references to political affairs.

Language: English.

Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item]. Baldwin Family Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Biographical Note
Ruth (Baldwin) Barlow (1756-1818), daughter of Michael Baldwin (1719-1787) was wife of the poet and statesman Joel Barlow (1754-1812). Her sister Clara (Baldwin) Bomford (1782-1856) married George Bomford (1782-1848), chief of the ordnance of the army.

Bibliography
For an account of these papers, see the Introduction to Four New Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen M. Williams, ed. Benjamin P. [UNK] and Carrie C. Autrey (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1937), pp. 8-10.

Scope and Content
This collection contains family correspondence and a few miscellaneous items, chiefly addressed to Joel and Ruth Barlow, Clara Baldwin Bomford, and her daughter Ruth Bomford Paine. Correspondents include Elizabeth Whitman and George William Erving (1769-1850), an American diplomat. The letters discuss the Baldwin family affairs and contain only occasional references to political affairs. Also included are a few documents and 1 manuscript poem.

The collection chiefly reflects the children of Michael Baldwin (1719-1787) of New Haven, including Abraham Baldwin (1754-1807), American statesman and founder of the University of Georgia; Henry Baldwin (1780-1844), justice of the United States Supreme Court; Ruth (Baldwin) Barlow (1756-1818) and her husband, Joel Barlow (1754-1812), American poet and statesman; Clara (Baldwin) Bomford (1782-1856), wife of George Bomford (1782-1848), chief of ordnance of the army; and the descendants of George and Clara Bomford. About one-sixth of the letters are addressed to Joel and/or Ruth Barlow, 1779-1816; about one-half to Ruth's sister, Clara (Baldwin) Bomford, 1803-1855; about one-sixth to Clara's daughter, Ruth (Bomford) Paine, 1856-1891; and the remainder to others. Perhaps the collection as a whole is best described as the remnant of a family archive which has passed through a number of generations.

Subject matter include Baldwin family affairs; social life in New Haven, Connecticut; the Kalorama property in Washington, D.C., purchased by the Barlows in 1807; sold to the Bomfords in 1818 and subsequently sold by them in 1846; society in
Washington, D.C., from 1803 to 1815; the Barlow’s social life in Paris in 1811 and 1812; and description and travel in Europe, with letters by George W. Erving describing Switzerland, Italy, and France. Includes biographical material for: Abraham Baldwin; Ruth (Baldwin) Barlow and Joel Barlow; Clara (Baldwin) Bomford and George Bomford; George William Erving; Robert and Harriet Fulton; and other members of the Baldwin family and descendants of George & Clara Bomford.

Of particular note are the letters of Elizabeth Whitman to Joel Barlow; the letters of Ruth Barlow; and the extensive series of letters from George William Erving (1769-1850), American diplomat, to Clara Bomford. Erving’s letters are perhaps the most substantial part of the collection and the earlier ones are particularly interesting. He never married, occupied several diplomatic posts in Europe, travelled about a good deal, and lived for many years in Paris. The letters contain nothing about his diplomatic work as such, but are full of reflections and observations on a number of subjects and some of them run to a considerable length—there is one of twenty-nine pages.

In the earlier part of the collection there are references to Joel Barlow and a number of letters addressed to him, but only one document and several postscripts in his handwriting, and copies of his will and one poem. There are occasional references to political affairs, but the primary importance of the collection is for the picture it presents of the social and day-to-day life of the time, and for the information it contains about the individuals noted below.

Persons represented by 3 or more pieces (Figures in square brackets indicate number of letters addressed to the individual):

- Baldwin, Abraham (24 pieces, 1789-1807 [2])
- Baldwin, Henry (8 pieces, 1813-1816)
- Baldwin, William D. (4 pieces, 1882)
- Barlow, Anica (Preble) (4 pieces, 1812-1855)
- Barlow, Joel (3 pieces, 1797-1812 [38])
- Barlow, Ruth (Baldwin) (67 pieces, 1795-1816 [41])
- Bishop, Victor (7 pieces, 1845-1852)
- Bomford, Clara (Baldwin) (21 pieces, 1811-1827 [236])
- Bomford, George (7 pieces, 1844-1848 [10])
- Bomford, James V. (6 pieces, 1883-1887)
- Bomford, Mattie (4 pieces, 1856-1883)
- Dall, Caroline Wells (Healey) (7 pieces, 1884-1892)
- Derby, Richard C. (5 pieces, 1882-1886)
- Erving, George William (116 pieces, 1812-1850 [1])
- Eyre, Wilson (4 pieces, 1882)
- Gaines, Edmund Pendleton (10 pieces, 1812-1814)
- Lafayette, Marquis De (4 pieces, 1789-1827)
- Linwood, Mary (3 pieces, 1805-1812)
- Madison, Dolly (Payne) Todd (4 pieces, 1811-1842)
- Maguire, Bernard (3 pieces, 1844-1848)
- Marbois, Comte De (6 pieces, 1812-1814)
- Maulsby, A. M. (5 pieces, 1882)
- Moore, Margaret Jane (King), Countess Mountcashell (4 pieces, 1812)
- Olmstead, Lemuel G. (11 pieces, 1854-1855)
- Riddle, John S. (4 pieces, 1844)
- Seymour, Louisa (5 pieces, 1886-1891)
- Smith, J. B. H. (5 pieces, 1851-1856)
- Thornton, Anna Maria (Brodeau) (17 pieces, 1812-1855 [18])
- Whitman, Elizabeth (15 pieces, 1779-1782)
- Williams, Helen Maria (6 pieces, 1812-1815)

Some notable items include:

- Baldwin, Abraham.
• To Ruth Barlow. 1789, July 3. "These Politicians Keep Such A Talking Round My Ears, That I Cannot Write You Any More At Present."

• To Joel Barlow. 1791, Mar. 13. "Many Of The Atlantic Settlers Wish The Western Country Not To Be Settled, And Take All Opportunities To Throw Blocks In The Way...."

• Will. 1807, Mar. 1.

• Barlow, Joel. Will. 1797, Apr. 15. Certified Copy, Dated 1813.

• Barlow, Ruth (Baldwin).
  • To Clara Bomford. 1810, Mar. 10 abd 14. Re: Clara'S Change Of Name; Mrs. Madison; Mme. Bonaparte; Napoleon'S Divorce; Etc.
  • To Clara Bomford. 1812, Sep. Letters Describing Her Visit To Mme. De Villette.
  • Will. 1813, Aug. 24.

• Bomford, Clara (Baldwin).
  • To Anna Maria (Brodeau) Thornton. 1811, Nov. 13. Re: Paris Opera, Joel Barlow'S Presentation To The Emperor, Etc.
  • To Anna Thornton. 1814, Dec. 11. Our [Connecticut] neighbors are mostly people of fortune or independant farmers, all delighted to see their friends & acquaintance, they call a visit from 2 in the afternoon till 9 in the evening--about 4 they have a table groaning with the weight of all the good things they can muster--chickens sausages, apple sauce, sweet meats, bread & butter cakes & pies & in the evening cider apples & nuts.

• Erving, George William.
  • To Joseph Gales. 1814, Oct. 22. Re: the misinterpretation by the British press of American news.
  • To Clara Bomford. 1819, Oct. 6-20. Re: his life in Paris; Mrs. Decatur (she is a charming woman; she was not absolutely a flame, but a little flamelet of mine many years ago, but all calculations duly made, I thought it most prudent to withdraw.); Lafayette (he is one of those in whom hope will never die, who will always see 'couleur de rose' tho affairs be as black as ink,--he thinks that good principles & a good heart is every thing,--tho a soldier he does not calculate well the power of bayonets...)
  • To the same. 1825, Nov. 20. I am glad that you like Mr Vaughan, but I neither presume or desire that you see much of him;--tho he is a very estimable man, perhaps more respectable (morally speaking) than ministers are in general, yet I shoud not have given him a letter to you (for this is against my rules) but that he almost compelled me to do so:-- with all Vaughans apparent simplicity & frankness, put this well into your head, that he is as thorough an Englishman as any of them; nor could they find in all England a more fit man to send to Washington; for his modesty, his want of all pretension.--his 'bonhommie' & his moderate calm manner, are the very qualities suited to our gullibility;...
  • To the same. 1826, June 8. Monroe... demands great 'swads' of our money without even the shadow of any right at all; thinking no doubt that as the mouth of the publick purse has opened for poor Lafayette, he may as well thrust his big fist into it; before the delicate paw of Madam Decatur shall have quite exhausted it, for the sake of her future husband.... [In Washington] You live precisely in the centre, the best position for observation--look about you,--probably you will not find one man excepting your good husband, who is devoid of this mania; look at their bald forehead--laden with care; see all the younger ones--rushing--& jostling & fighting & worrying each other, their hearts full of bitterness & envy; their nights sleepless; see what a proportion leave their families, neglect their business, impair their fortunes & ruin their constitutions, for the gratification of empty vanity--called 'ambition':--for do not mistake, not one in an hundred is there to 'serve his country' as a duty. Poor Rufus King!--he has been minister & Senator, & not being able to arrive at the Presidency for which he has been struggling all his life, must needs be minister again; well he dies in the effort! Poor Monroe! he arrived by dint of perseverance, he retires, health & fortune ruined, reputation in not much better condition,--he is to be consumed by mortification! Poor Crawford! the best years of his life sacrificed, his estate & profession neglected;--all his prospects defeated.--he vegetates!--so of the rest.
  • To the same. 1835, Mar. 18. You & I who knew so well must sympathize in the loss of that most excellent friend Mr Crawford; I have never seen in publick life anyone of such perfect & disinterested patriotism, or in private of more pure integrity.
• Fulton, Robert. To Joel Barlow. 1809, Mar. 1. Re: Explanation of his moving away from Kalorama; Barlow’s interest in the steamboat (you had little faith in the success or profits of the boat); Barlow’s financial affairs; and getting The Columbiad reviewed in London.


• Lafayette, Marquis de. Dinner invitation to Joel Barlow. 1789, Feb. 9.

• Thornton, Anna Maria (Brodeau). To Clara Bomford. 1812, Mar. 15. Re: Count Crillon.

• Whitman, Elizabeth. To Joel Barlow, 14 letters, 1779-1780; and one letter to Ruth Barlow, 1782. The tragic life of Elizabeth Whitman served as the basis for the popular early American novel by Hannah Webster Foster, The Coquette, or, the history of Eliza Wharton, 1797. These letters were published (inaccurately) by Mrs. Caroline Dall in The Romance of the Association..., Cambridge, 1875.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library’s Online Catalog.

Subjects
Barlow, Joel, 1754-1812 -- Correspondence. Paine, Ruth Bomford -- Correspondence.
Erving, George William, 1769-1850 -- Correspondence.
Barlow, Ruth, 1755-1818 -- Correspondence.
Bomford, Clara Baldwin -- Correspondence.
Whitman, Elizabeth, 1752-1788 -- Correspondence.
Travelers’ writings, American.
Switzerland -- Description and travel.
Italy -- Description and travel.
France -- Description and travel.
Washington (D.C.) -- Social life and customs -- 19th century -- Sources.
New Haven (Conn.) -- Social life and customs -- 19th century -- Sources.

Forms/Genres
Letters (correspondence) -- United States.
Poems -- United States.
Family papers -- United States.

Alternate Authors
Paine, Ruth Bomford, correspondent.
Barlow, Joel, 1754-1812.
Bomford, Clara Baldwin, correspondent.
Erving, George William, 1769-1850.
Barlow, Ruth, 1755-1818, correspondent.
Whitman, Elizabeth, 1752-1788.

Box 1  1696-1809
Box 2  1810-1812 August
Box 3  1812 September-1813
Box 4  1814-1816
Box 5  1817-1835
Box 6  1836-1848 July
Box 7  1848 August-1881
Box 8  1882-1892 and ephemera

The ephemera consists of 1 folder with miscellaneous items including envelopes; some printed materials; handwritten transcriptions of earlier letters; the front page of The New York Herald (April 15, 1865); and ordnance buttons.