

**DEWITT FAMILY
PAPERS, 1750-1938****SC15161**

QUANTITY: 55 boxes (16 cubic ft.)
ACCESS: Open to research
ACQUISITION: Purchased by New York State Library from Western Hemisphere, Inc.
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PROCESSED BY: Fred Bassett, Assistant Librarian, Manuscripts and Special Collections,
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Biographical Note

Petrus Dewitt , son of Tjerck and Anne (Pawling), was born July 19, 1722, died January 3, 1790, and was buried in the churchyard of the Reformed Dutch church at Rhinebeck. He resided in the town of Hyde Park, Dutchess County, New York, on the estate derived from his mother, being part of the Pawling patent, including the site of the present Staatsburg. He was a captain of militia, and the powder horn which he used at Ticonderoga is kept by his descendants [as of 1914]. He married, June 8, 1749, Rachel Radcliff, born December 14, 1723, died July 20, 1794, daughter of Joachim Radcliff. Children: Johannes or John, mentioned below; Hillitje, born December 31, 1753, died at Rochester, Ulster County, New York, September 6, 1807, unmarried; Ann, October 26, 1762, married, December 22, 1782, Philip du Bois Bevier, baptized January 1, 1752, son of Louis and Esther (du Bois) Bevier.

Johannes, or John, son of Petrus (Peter) and Rachel (Radcliff) DeWitt, was born February 26, 1752, and resided at Rhinebeck and Poughkeepsie, in Dutchess County, New York. He was a soldier of the Revolutionary War, and was afterwards sheriff of Dutchess County. About the beginning of the revolution he established his residence on Crum Elbow Creek, in Charlotte precinct, afterward the town of Clinton, in Dutchess County, where all his children were born. In 1804 he removed to Albany, and two years later to Newburg, in Orange County, New York, where he resided until his death, April 12, 1808.

Johannes maintained a mill in Dutchess County, and furnished flour for use of the army during the revolution. He married, in April 1773, Catherine Van Vliet, born September 15, 1755, died September 29, 1804, daughter of Dirck and Helen (Weaver) Van Vliet. Children: Rachel, born March 2, 1774, married Dr. Joshua E.R. Burch; Helena, May 13, 1775, became the wife of Dr. Gilbert Smith; Neltje, died young; Neltje, born October 3, 1778; Peter, mentioned below; Cornelius, April 1, 1782, died December 5, 1809; Hillitje, October 18, 1783, married John Chambers; Andrew, October 27, 1785, operated mills in Orange County; Elizabeth, August 1, 1786, became the wife of John H. Walsh; Richard, April 2, 1788, died November 5, 1806; Miles Sherbrook, April 13, 1790, died in his fifth year; William Radcliff, February 25, 1792, became a clergyman, and was many years pastor of the Presbyterian church at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, one of his sons, Calvin DeWitt, was surgeon-general of the United States army and died at Washington; another son, Rev. Dr. John DeWitt, was long a member of the faculty of Princeton

Seminary; John, born January 14, 1794, was a merchant at West Point; Miles, February 16, 1800, died in 1812.

Peter, eldest son of Johannes, or John, and Catherine (Van Vliet) DeWitt, was born April 19, 1780, at Poughkeepsie, and was an eminent lawyer in New York City, a man of considerable and varied accomplishments. He occupied the building at No.88 Nassau Street, New York City, which has been continuously used as a law office by his descendants down to the present time [1914]. He died at his residence on St. Mark's Place, in the city of New York, May 8, 1851. Peter married, June 15, 1807, Jenat Gosman, born 1789, died January 17, 1883, at Bronxville, daughter of George and Janet (Duncan) Gosman. Children: George Gosman, born September 12, 1808, died April 22, 1891; Jenat Duncan, April 12, 1810, died July 10, 1815; Cornelius John, January 12, 1812, died at Bronxville, New York, August 13, 1874, unmarried; Catherine Van Vliet, September 11, 1813, married, June 11, 1859, Dr. Theodore L. Mason, who died in 1882; Edward, April 23, 1816, died September 26, 1872; Alfred, February 15, 1818, died October 11, 1899; Peter, February 12, 1820, died January 23, 1854; Theodore, November 29, 1821, died March 31, 1881; Helena, February 10, 1824, married James Chambers, and died March 23, 1891; Robert Gosman, May 12, 1826, died 1848; Henry Ranin, June 25, 1828, died May 13, 1874; William Andrew, July 31, 1830, died November 2, 1863; Gilbert Smith, July 26, 1835, died December 9, 1882.

From: Reynolds, Cuyler. *Genealogical and Family History of Southern New York and the Hudson River Valley: A Record of the Achievements of Her People and the Making of a Commonwealth and the Building of a Nation*. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1914), pp. 1241-1242

Scope and Content Note

The papers of the DeWitt family document the experiences and activities of a prominent family of the mid-Hudson Valley region of New York State from 1750 to 1890. This includes several boxes of incoming letters addressed to various members of the Dewitt Family in regards to matters of their personal and professional careers. The letters to John DeWitt, 1803-1808, concern selling and leasing of land in Dutchess and Sullivan counties, New York, and financial accounts with both creditors and debtors of the various mercantile enterprises under his proprietorship. Included are several letters regarding the negative effects of the Embargo Act of 1808. Similarly, business and real estate contracts were the principal topic of letters to John's sons, Andrew and Cornelius, 1804-1820, who were co-partners with him in mercantile houses located in Albany and, later, Newburgh, New York.

Peter DeWitt's incoming letters, 1797-1851, are much more substantial in that they provide greater insight in the intricate details of everyday family life. The earliest letters include those from his father regarding the estate of Catherine DeWitt, who perished in the sinking of the sloop *Greyhound* in 1804; they also cover the moving of his mercantile business from Albany to Newburgh. From 1809 to 1821 there is a dearth of letters, followed by a number of letters from his son, George DeWitt, while attending the Danbury School, 1820-1823, and Yale College, 1823-1826, that offer a good perspective on academic life of that time period. Also, Peter Dewitt

received many letters during the 1820s that concern legal matters of the estate of his brother Andrew, and of Gosman and Birch family relatives.

There are several letters from Charles G. DeWitt, who was *chargé d'affaires* to Central America, ca. January 1830-1839; the letters focus on problems of moving personal possessions, the sighting of Haley's Comet, and other aspects of everyday life, rather than revelations about the culture and society of Guatemala.

From 1834 to 1851 the majority of letters received by Peter were from his son, George, who wrote at length about the many details of everyday life on the farm, his logging business, as well as his involvement in church and community matters. In essence the story of this portion of George DeWitt's life is chronicled, beginning with his move in 1834 to family lands in Sullivan County, New York, for reasons of health, and the tremendous amount of hard work entailed in clearing and cultivating the land. His role in the development and incorporation of the Town of Callicoon are well documented. Mentioned frequently are his activities on behalf of the community, such as the local government posts he held, lobbying for a post office and turnpikes, and donating land for building sites of the First Presbyterian Church and school. Aspects of the economic social and religious life of the community are also mentioned: the impact of the tanning business in the local economy, influx of German and Swiss immigrants who settled in the area, and fundamentalist revivals which were sweeping rural upstate New York at that time.

The last major component of letters in this series is those received by George DeWitt, 1821-1880, mostly from his parents and siblings concerning family matters. For example, the letters from his father were generally in answer to his own, offering advice on land purchases, building contracts, and other legal matters. More importantly, there are several letters concerning the ventures of Alfred and John DeWitt in California at the time of the gold rush, 1848-1850. It appears they were embroiled in some kind of dispute, the nature of which is not clear. There is no indication that they were actually engaged in the mining of gold, but nevertheless, they had probably sought to profit from the parties that were, as practicing attorneys in San Francisco, since there were many legal disputes involving conflicting preemptory claims. The intentions of Alfred and John are a matter of speculation, but their father's, Peter, reaction is not, as he expressed in no uncertain terms his disdain for such foolish adventurism.

The Estate Documents and Papers series includes wills, indentures of personal goods and chattels, and financial records, compiled by the executor. Also included is considerable documentation of the family's landholdings in Dutchess County, New York (Town of Clinton) and Sullivan County (Hardenburgh Patent), such as deeds, mortgages, contracts, and surveys.

The bulk of records not described hitherto are an assortment of bound volumes and loose papers generated by their official or business activities. A large portion of these materials are in poor physical condition as a result of damage inflicted by mold and rodents. John DeWitt held the office of sheriff for Dutchess County, 1783-1789 and 1794-1795; his duties are documented in various kinds of records, such as bound register books of court writs, or judgments rendered, bail bond receipts, arrest warrants, summonses, dockets of court cases, and maintenance accounts.

Peter DeWitt's official position was that of attorney for the New York City Mayor's Court; his duties are documented by promissory notes and receipts regarding the payment of fees by his clients. Other official records include books of cost and case registers kept by Peter Radcliff regarding his advocacy on behalf of clients before various courts in New York State, and docket books, 1847-1858, recording cases heard and judgments rendered by George G. DeWitt, as justice of the peace for the Town of Callicoon, Sullivan County, New York. Business enterprises of DeWitt family members were documented by an assortment of account journals and ledger books. Of special interest are the books of Peter DeWitt's general store and grain mill that aided the Continental Army during the Revolution. Also, the sloop *Washington* papers of Andrew DeWitt, offer some insight into the merchant marine business during the early nineteenth century.

Ancillary items and papers include photographs, honorary certificates, and materials relating to DeWitt family history and genealogy. Photographs include portraits of various members of the family, and views of family homes and haunts; two sets showing interior views of the law office of DeWitt, Lockman, and DeWitt, circa 1890 and 1930. These office scenes show employees at work as well provide a good perspective on office arrangement and décor of the time.

Box and Folder List

Box	Folder(s)	Description
		Correspondence
		Letters to John DeWitt
1	1-6	1803-1805
2	1-11	1806-1808
		Letters to Andrew and Cornelius DeWitt
3	1-12	1804-1807
4	1-12	1808-1820
		Letters to Peter DeWitt
5	1-12	1797-1808
6	1-14	1810-1833
7	1-11	1834-1842
8	1-11	1843-1851
		Letters to Jenat DeWitt
9	1-4	1820-1873
		Letters to George DeWitt
10	1-10	1821-1833
11	1-10	1834-1842
12	1-12	1843-1857
13	1-10	1858-1880
		Assorted Family Correspondence
13	11-15	1823-1872
14	1-9	Genealogy and Family History Papers
		Personal and Household Financial Papers
15	1	Peter DeWitt Account Memoranda Book, 1801-1802 (1 folder)

Box	Folder(s)	Description
15	2-3	P. DeWitt, Bills & Receipts, 1805-1808 (2 folders)
15	4	Yale College, Bills & Receipts, 1796-1799 (1 folder)
15	5	School, including Columbia College, Bills & Receipts, 1844-1860
15	6	Cash Accounts, 1828
15	7-8	Account Memoranda Books, 1860-1861
15	9	Sermons and Writings (2 folders)
15	10	Edward DeWitt Travel Diary, 1887
15	11	J. DeWitt Ciphering Book 1766
16	1-3	Edward DeWitt College Notebooks, 1860s
		Clubs and Organizations
16	4-5	Holland Society
16	6	St. Nicholas Society
16	7	News Clippings
16	8-9	Ephemera
		Estate Records and Papers
17	1-5	Peter DeWitt (1722-1790)
17	6-8	John DeWitt
17	9-10	Assessments
17	11	Real Estate, John DeWitt
17	12	Hillitje DeWitt Estate
18	1	Estate – Letters of Administration re: John, Cornelius and Andrew
18	2	Land Titles, Newburgh, N.Y. (Andrew and Cornelius DeWitt)
18	3-4	Peter DeWitt: Bond Discharge of Andrew DeWitt
18	5-6	Andrew DeWitt
18	7	Peter DeWitt, Will
18	8	Jenat DeWitt
18	9	Tjerck DeWitt
18	10-11	George DeWitt Library Catalogs
19	1-5	George Gosman
19	6	Estate: Hunter
19	7	Accounts/Letters, 1820
19	8	Dr. John R. Birch
19	9	Direck Van Vliet
19	10	Legal Correspondence
		Land Records, Surveys, and Related Papers
20	1-12	Pawlins Purchase, Dutchess County, N.Y. (Town of Clinton) re: titles held by John DeWitt
21	1-7	Sullivan County, N.Y.: Hardenburgh Patent land in the vicinity of present-day Youngsville, N.Y. re: titles held by John and Peter DeWitt
22	1-9	Sullivan County, N.Y. re: titles held by George D. DeWitt and family
		Dutchess County Sheriff Papers - J. DeWitt
23	1-6	Correspondence, 1790-1791
23	7-9	Letters to John DeWitt, 1794-1795
24	1-11	Bail Bonds 1789-1790

Box	Folder(s)	Description
25	1-15	Bail Bonds 1791-1792
26	1-5	Maintenance Accounts, 1790-1794
26	6	Deputations, 1790
27	7	Executions, 1789-1793
27	8	Jury Panels, 1790-1792
27	1-8	Receipts, 1790-1791 (8 folders)
28	1-8	Dockets - Dutchess County Court of Pleas, 1794-1795 (8 folders)
29		Law Office Records and Papers of Peter DeWitt
29	1	Book of Cost, 1797-1813 (Peter Radcliff) (1 volume)
29	2	Register, Supreme Court, 1792-1797 (1 volume)
30	1	Register "A," 1797-1807 (Peter Radcliff) (1 volume)
30	2	Register "B," 1807-1812 (Peter Radcliff) (1 volume)
31	1-5	Bonds, 1805-1811 (5 folders)
31	6-9	Mayor's Court Statements, 1805-1811
31	10	Accounts, Bonds and Notes (early 1800s)
31	11	Mayor's Court: Bonds, Notes, 1808-1817
31	12	Mayor's Court: Bonds, 1808-1817
32	1-2	Bonds and Notes 1805-1806
32	3-5	Notes, 1805-1807
32	6-8	Mayor's Court Notes, 1807
32	9-11	Bonds, Notes, 1808-1809
32	12	Notes, Receipts, 1807-1810
33	1-9	Accounts, Bonds and Notes 1815-ca. 1822
33	10-11	Mayor's Court 1816-1820
33	12-13	Clerk Sitings – Invoices
33	14	Mayor's Court – Assorted Papers
34	1-11	Receipts, 1807-1808, 1811-1815
35	1-11	Receipts, 1816-1819
36	1-10	Receipts, 1819-1821
37	1	Blotter, 1803-1814 (1 volume)
37	2	Mayor's Court, Receipt Book "A," 1803-1810 (1 volume)
37	3	Mayor's Court, Receipt Book "B," 1810-1816 (1 volume)
37	4-5	Office Accounts, 1806-1816
37	6-7	Bank Account Books, 1807-1823
		Mercantile Records and Papers
38	1-14	Accounts, Bills and Receipts, 1802-1805
39	1-13	Accounts, Bills and Receipts, 1805-1808
40	1-13	Accounts, Bills and Receipts, 1808-1812
		Sloop Washington Papers
41	1-7	Orders, 1814-1816
42	1-5	Orders, 1817-1818
43	1-10	Bills, Receipts, 1814-1816
44	1-5	Bills, Receipts, 1814-1817 (5 folders)
44	6	Sales Record, 1815-1816(1 volume)

Box	Folder(s)	Description
44	7	Boggs & Thompson (Thomas Durkin) Receipt Book, 1823-1829 (1 volume)
45	1-13	J.R. Birch Bills and Receipts, 1800-1810
45	1-12	J.R. Birch Bills and Receipts, 1811-1815
47	1	Account Journal, 1764-1789 (1 volume)
47	2	[Peter DeWitt] Ledger "A," Rhinebeck (Rhynbeek), 1750-1759 (1 volume)
48	1	Ledger "B," 1759-1785 (1 volume)
49	1	Dutchess County. Court of Common Pleas Writs, 1789-1793 (1 volume)
50	1	Justice Court, Docket Book, 1847-1858 (George G. DeWitt) (1 volume)
50	2	Justice Court, Docket Book, 1858-1859 (George G. DeWitt) (1 volume)
50	3	John DeWitt Inventory of Estate, 1806 (1 volume)
51	1	Journal, 1794-1801 (John DeWitt) (1 volume)
51	2	Day Book, 1800-1806 (Dr. J.R. Birch) (1 volume)
51	3	Journal, 1829-1848 (1 volume)
		Photographs and Prints
52	1	Portraits: Cornelius John DeWitt, son of Peter DeWitt (3 items); Edward DeWitt, son of Peter DeWitt (3 items); unidentified (4 items): Photographs printed by Alman & Co., 590 Fifth Ave., N.Y
52	2	Portraits: George Gosman DeWitt; Julia foster DeWitt; Ella Flagg DeWitt; William G. DeWitt; William A. DeWitt; Thomas DeWitt; Jacob DeWitt (12 item)
52	3	Photographs: Views of George DeWitt at South Side Club (2 items)
52	4	Photographs of Adirondack League Club, Little Moose Lake, N.Y.: views of the club house and boat landing. Photographs labeled: Ralph's, Chateauguy, Adirondacks. Copyright 1889, S.R. Stoddard, Glens Falls, N.Y. (2 items)
52	5	Photographs of Residences: Radcliff family, [Rhinecliff, N.Y.?] and Edward DeWitt, Englewood, N.J. (3 items)
52	6	Photographs of DeWitt residence and grounds, Bronxville, N.Y. : views of dwelling house, barn, and grounds (9 items)
52	7	Photographs of Alfred DeWitt summer home, Staatsburgh, N.Y. (3 items)
52	8	Interior scenes of the law offices of [DeWitt, Lockman & DeWitt, ca. 1890] (5 items)
52	9	Interior scenes of the law offices of [DeWitt, Lockman & DeWitt, ca. 1890] (6 items)
52	10	Interior scenes of the law offices of [DeWitt, Lockman & DeWitt, ca. 1890] (6 items)
52	11	Carte de visites and cabinet cards: includes George DeWitt, Edward DeWitt, Gilbert S. DeWitt, William R. DeWitt , Julean Foster DeWitt (14 items, mostly unidentified)
52	12	Carte de visites of the Van Vliets, B. Talmadge, and friends/relatives 18 items)
52	13	Portrait of Peter DeWitt (3 copies and 1 small photograph)

Box	Folder(s)	Description
52	14	DeWitt Family (assorted): Alfred DeWitt, 1897 (1 Item); Jenat DeWitt, wife of Peter, and her son, Gilbert; Theodore DeWitt, George G. DeWitt's brother (1 item); Aunt Sue De Witt (1 item)
52	15	Edward DeWitt II family, ca. 1917-1918 (4 items); several unidentified photographs related to a wedding and other miscellaneous portraits, which appear to be of the Edward Dewitt II family, ca. 1910s-1920s (9 items)
52	16	View of the grave of John D. and Catherine Vliet DeWitt, 1904 (2 items: Mapes, Newburgh, N.Y.); views of an unidentified cemetery (2 items); unidentified photograph of commemorative medallion (2 items)
52	17	[View of the building housing DeWitt Law Office at 88 Nassau Street, New York, N.Y., ca. 1910s], M. Rosenfeld, Photographer, 116 Nassau St., New York (1 item); photograph of a suspension bridge (1 item)
		Photographs (folio size)
53	1	Portraits: Edward DeWitt, son of Peter DeWitt (1 item); Helena DeWitt, G.G. DeWitt's sister (1 item); J.D. Jones (?) (1 item)); unidentified mother and daughter (1 item)
53	2	Portraits: [Edward DeWitt II, ca. 1930]; Edward DeWitt III, 1938; Don Woodruff, Atlantic City, 1937 (2 items); Cynthia Woodruff, Atlantic City, 1937 (1 item); Mrs. Walter Scott Shinn (2 items); Donald Woodruff, Jr., 16 months old (1 item); Cynthia Woodruff, 1930 (1 item); Barbara and Cynthia Woodruff, 1930 (1 item); photograph of three children, 2 of which are boys (2 copies)
53	3	Residence of Peter DeWitt, New York, N.Y.; residence of George DeWitt, Bronxville, [N.Y.]; view of room in a home, labeled "Radcliff's"
53	4	Home of Tjerck DeWitt labeled "2 nd home built on the farm of Tjerck Class DeWitt before Revo. War" (2 copies); photograph of graveyard labeled "Grave stone of Andrus DeWitt, died 1710" (2 copies)
53	5	Exterior views of a dwelling house [Tjerck DeWitt's home?](3 items)
53	6	View of camp of William G. DeWitt at Little Moose Lake, N.Y. circa 1900 (1 item)
53	7	Scenes of the law offices of DeWitt, Lockman and DeWitt, 1930
53	8	Scenes of the law offices of DeWitt, Lockman and DeWitt, 1930
53	9	[Columbia College Class of 1886, graduation]; annotated with arrows indicating Edward DeWitt and George Gosman DeWitt (1 item)
53	10	"Columbia Class '86 at the Claremont, June 13, 1906" [reunion] (1 item)
		Prints and Certificates
54	1	Diploma awarded to Edward DeWitt from Columbia College in 1886
54	2	Portrait of Joan De Wit and his brother Cornelis de Wit, 1672; Portrait of Cor's De Witt, 1623-1672; portrait of Witte Cornelisz de With, ca. 1652; portrait of Cornelis de Witt; print of a certificate marking the marriage of Joan de Wit (John DeWitt) and Eliszbet de Vroede (Elizabeth deVroede) printed in Dutch with an English transcription; portrait of Iacob (Jacob) Cats; portrait of Willem de 11, Prins van Oranje, ca. 1749; portrait of Admiral Ian van Gaalen (Johan van Galen) and prints of three sea battles, one of which is labeled "Slagh van Ian van Gaalen [sic] by Livorne";

Box	Folder(s)	Description
		allegorical print of Kornelis de Wit, 1667; image of "Les deux freres Jean et Corneille de Wit, masacrez, et ensuite, attafchez au gibet, a l;a Haye le 20e. Aoust 1672
54	3	School Reports of 1861 (1 roll)
54	4-8	Certificates (4 rolled items; serious preservation problems)
		Miscellaneous Items
55	1	Wallet of J. F. DeWitt, Youngsville, N.Y.
55	2	Packet of Carte de visites of the home of Peter DeWitt, New York , N.Y. (See also Box 54 folder 3)
55	3	Early photograph (glass on copper plate?)
55	4	Book catalogues annotated by John DeWitt (Bound)

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