

**Benson John Lossing  
Collection, 1847-1891****SC19618****QUANTITY:** 2 Boxes (1.5 cubic ft.)**ACCESS:** Open to research; certain items noted in the inventory list are stored in the vault, which requires making special arrangements for viewing**ACQUISITION:** Collation of items formerly accessioned and catalogued separately. Collated, March 1995; original accession number in parentheses; details are found in the accession records.**PROCESSED BY:** Fred Bassett, Senior Librarian, Manuscripts and Special Collections, March 1995, Revised November 1996, September 2004, February 2010**Biographical Note:**

Benson John Lossing, a wood engraver, illustrator, author, editor and publisher, was born in 1813 in Beekman, Dutchess County, New York, to a farmer of Dutch descent. Orphaned at age 12 in 1824, he moved to Poughkeepsie, New York, where in 1825 he began a seven-year apprenticeship to a watchmaker. During the years of his apprenticeship his spare time was spent studying history and journalism, which would ultimately become his lifetime avocation. At the age of twenty-two he was made joint editor and proprietor of the *Poughkeepsie Telegraph*, and later became joint editor of the *Poughkeepsie Casket*, a literary fortnightly. His work with the latter publication provided him with the opportunity to learn the art of engraving on wood from J. A. Adams, illustrator for the paper.

Lossing moved to New York City in 1838 and in 1839 began two years of editing and illustrating for J. S. Redfield's *Family Magazine*. During his spare time he produced his first book, *Outline History of the Fine Arts*, in 1840. In 1846 he teamed up with engraver William Barritt, with whom he worked until 1869. During this time his illustrations appeared in the *Young People's Mirror* and several other periodicals.

Around 1848 Lossing conceived of the idea of writing a narrative sketchbook on the American Revolution. The first installment was published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1850, but three years passed before the completed *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution* was published. To gather material for the work, Lossing traveled more than 8,000 miles throughout the United States and Canada. Often he would hastily make sketches while traveling from which block drawings were done later for engravings. The book was critically acclaimed and won him a wide reputation.

During the thirty-five years that followed, Lossing published prolifically, and was either author or editor of more than forty titles. Among them were two more of the pictorial series, covering the War of 1812 and the Civil War. In 1860-1861, the *London Art Journal* featured a series of his articles describing the history and scenery of the Hudson Valley; the articles, with pen-and-pencil sketches, were published in 1866 under the title *The Hudson: From the Wilderness to the Sea*. From 1872 to 1874 he was editor of the *American Historical Record and Repertory of Notes and Queries*.

In 1868, Lossing moved to Dover Plains, Dutchess County, New York, in which his home was called "The Ridge." Here he had a fireproof library constructed to house his personal collection of over five thousand books. Lossing was actively involved in several charitable, civic, literary, and historical clubs and societies in Dutchess County.

Lossing was twice married: first, to Alice Barritt, daughter of Thomas Barritt, on June 18, 1833; after she died in 1855, he married Helen Sweet, the daughter of Nehemiah Sweet, November 18, 1856. Benson J. Lossing died June 3, 1891, at his home in Dover Plains.

### Scope and Contents Note:

This collection is comprised chiefly of correspondence related to Benson J. Lossing's long and varied career as a wood engraver, illustrator, author, editor and publisher. His correspondents, representing a who's who in arts, education, history, literature, journalism, publishing, law, government and politics, include Joel Benton, Albert Smith Bickmore, Henry B. Dawson, John A. Dix, Samuel Adams Drake, Theodore Dwight, Harvey Gridley Eastman, Abraham Bruyn Hasbrouck, Joel Tyler Headley, Franklin B. Hough, Samuel F. B. Morse, Horatio Seymour, and Washington Hunt. Many of the letters relate specifically to his research and writing endeavors. Some of these letters also include comments on political and social issues of the time, which encompassed the Civil War and the subsequent Reconstruction era. One letter that is especially interesting was written by Julia Clinton Jones, daughter of DeWitt Clinton, who described her experiences of living in Helena, Montana, when the place was still a frontier settlement. The correspondence is generally arranged chronologically with a few exceptions.

Special correspondence files include several letters with librarians at the New York State Library regarding materials in its holdings related to the American Revolution; letters with various individuals that relate to obtaining a photographic image of the Emancipation Proclamation; and a collection letters related to Lossing's work as editor of the *Young People's Mirror*, a periodical for youth that was published by Edward Walker of New York.

In addition to correspondence, this collection contains nineteenth-century photographs of President Abraham Lincoln's final manuscript of the Emancipation Proclamation that was issued on January 1, 1863. The original manuscript was destroyed in the 1871 Chicago fire. Other items of note are drafts of Lossing's articles and assorted research notes; a sketchbook, ca. 1830s, that contains drawings that appear to have been take-offs of works done by famous artists like Asher B. Durand, and a diary, 1855-1856, of Helen Lossing, that contains comments on lectures attended, Friends' meetings, discovery of Revolutionary War manuscripts at Kingston, the raising of the West Point chain, and reminiscences of her father regarding Revolutionary War officers.

### Container List:

Box	Folder	Description
		<b>Letters, 1853-1855</b>
1	1	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, [N.Y.], to Dr. John W. Francis, January 25, 1853 (9826-42)

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	S.E. Church, Albany, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, February 5, 1853 (15577)
1	1	Elias H. Benson, Syracuse, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, August 15, 1854 (7865)
1	1	Derick Knickerbocker, Rochester, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, September 19, 1855 (5573)
		<b>Letters, 1856-1859</b>
1	2	[Benjamin Franklin] Tefft, Clifton Springs, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], January 26, 1856 (13709)
1	2	John C. Hamilton, New York, to Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, [N.Y.], January 7, 1857 (7249)
1	2	Benson J. Lossing, Washington, [D.C.], to Helen Lossing, February 3, 1857 (17940)
1	2	Joel T. Headley, Newburgh, N.Y., to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], July 1, 1858 (7251)
1	2	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, [N.Y.], to John W. Francis. March 24, 1859 (9826-41)
1	2	A.M.M. van der Chuys, New York, to Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, [N.Y.], November 29, 1859 (5608)
		<b>Letters, 1860-1863</b>
1	3	Benson J. Lossing, Troy, [N.Y.], to Helen Lossing, March 26, 1860 (17940)
1	3	Franklin B. Hough, Albany, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], April 14, 1860 (5546)
1	3	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, [N.Y.], to Henry B. Dawson, June 19, 1860 (17852)
1	3	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, [N.Y.], to F.J. Dreer, September 23, 1861
1	3	Samuel F. B. Morse, Locust Grove, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], July 7, 1862 (15662)
1	3	Marie Mitchell, Lynn, [Mass.], to Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., July 14, 1862 (7245)
1	3	Marcia Balmanno, Brooklyn, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], January 22, 1863 (18459)
1	3	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, [N.Y.], to [Sheldon and Company] (Publishers), August 14, 1863 (18803)
1	3	John A. McAllister, [Philadelphia, Pa.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], November 14, 1863 (6825)
1	3	J. Francis Fischer, [Jenkintown, Pa.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], October 23, 1863 (517)
		<b>Letters, 1864</b>
1	4	J. Francis Fischer, [Jenkintown, Pa.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], February 6, 1864 (518)
1	4	John A. McAllister to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], February 21, 1864 (18110)
1	4	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to [Mrs.] Vanderbilt, March 16, 1864 (20723)

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	4	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to [Mrs.] Vanderbilt, Flatbush, L.I. [N.Y.], March 23, 1864 (20723)
1	4	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., S. Hutchinson, March 24, 1864 (2230)
1	4	Anna T.H. Taylor, Cold Spring, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, April 5, 1864 (7247)
1	4	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to [Seth] H. Fulton, May 16, 1864 (17770)
1	4	Helen Lossing, Quaker Hill, to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], August 15, 1864 (17940)
1	4	Washington Hunt, Lockport, N.Y., to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], November 18, 1864 (7244)
		<b>Letters, 1865-1869</b>
1	5	[F. J. Derry?], Philadelphia, [Pa.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], January 23, 1865
1	5	Benson J. Lossing, Philadelphia, [Pa.], to W. B. Dayton, May 1, 1865 (4615)
1	5	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to William B. Reed, June 9, 1867 (4873)
1	5	Stewart L. Woodford, Canal Department, Albany, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., June 19, 1867 (7250)
1	5	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Henry B. Dawson, August 17, 1867 (20814)
1	5	George Schuyler, Dobbs Ferry, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., August 30, 1867, with attached notes on Schuyler family genealogy (7225)
1	5	Matthew Vassar [Poughkeepsie, N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, December 2, 1867; invitation (7240)
1	5	Benson J. Lossing, New York, to Messrs. W.A. Townsend and Adams, December 4, 1869 (20277)
1	5	Benson J. Lossing to [Elbridge G. Spaulding?], 1869 (draft) (1678)
		<b>Letters, 1870-1874</b>
1	6	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., to Henry B. Dawson, April 6, 1870 (17852)
1	6	D. S. Martin, Rutgers Female College, New York to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], February 6, 1872 (7266)
1	6	Charles Gayarré, New Orleans, to Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., February 6, 1872 (7268)
1	6	Charles Gayarré, New Orleans, to Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., February 26, 1872 (7269)
1	6	Margaret van Rensselaer, Cherry Hill, [Albany, N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], March 18, 1872
1	6	Samuel A. Drake, Boston, [Mass.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], February 26, 1873 (6733)
1	6	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., to John A. Dix, [Albany, N.Y.], September 4, 1873 (1853)

Box	Folder	Description
1	6	John A. Dix, West Hampton, N.Y., to Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., September 18, 1873, with news clipping attached (1852)
1	6	Nelson Chase, Washington Heights, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], June 30, 1873
		<b>Letters, 1875-1879</b>
1	7	Charles R. Daly, New York, to Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., June 3, 1875 (7243)
1	7	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., to Helen Lossing, July 27, 1875 (17940)
1	7	Joel Benton, [Amenia, N.Y.] to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], March 8, 1876 (17924)
1	7	Frank M. Etting to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], October 19, 1876 (883)
1	7	Harvey Gridley Eastman, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], December 13, 1876 (3343)
1	7	Harvey Gridley Eastman, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], December 21, 1876 (3344)
1	7	Edward Satterlee, Highland Falls, N.Y., to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], May 6, 1877 (18109)
1	7	Edward Satterlee, Highland Falls, N.Y., to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], May 14, 1877 (18109)
1	7	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., to Abraham Bruyn Hasbrouck, Kingston, N.Y., July 26, 1877
1	7	Horatio Seymour, Utica, N.Y., to Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., August 10, 1877 (6732)
1	7	Theodorus Bailey Myers, [New York], to Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., January 12, 1879 (7253)
1	7	Theodore Dwight, Department of State, Washington, D.C., to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], January 21, 1879 (7241)
		<b>Letters, 1880-1884</b>
1	8	Benson J. Lossing (note). 1881 (5150)
1	8	John Jay, New York, to Benson J. Lossing, January 28 1882 (5225)
1	8	Charles P. Daly, New York, to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], February 26, 1883 (7242)
1	8	Joel Benton, Amenia, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], March 8, 1883 (17925)
1	8	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., to Joel Benton, March 15, 1883 (17925)
1	8	Joel Benton, Amenia, [N.Y.], to Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., March 17, 1883 (17925)
1	8	Albert Smith Bickmore, American Museum of Natural History, New York, to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], September 24, 1883 (7267)
1	8	Owen T. Coffin, Peekskill, N.Y. to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], October 2, 1884 (881)
		<b>Letters, 1885-1887</b>
1	9	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y. to E. H. Gross, Melrose, Mass., January

Box	Folder	Description
		4, 1885
1	9	Charles B. Norton, London, to Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., January 6, 1885 (882)
1	9	[Lewis] Wallace, Quaker Hill, to Helen Lossing [Johnson], August 31, 1885 (18106)
1	9	John Eliot Bowen, [New York], to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], December 28, 1885 (7248)
1	9	Julia Clinton Jones, Lathrop, Calif., to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], [1886?] (13520)
1	9	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., to Mr. Halloway. August 14, 1886 (4614)
1	9	H. Schaus [New York], to Benson J. Lossing, January 20, 1887 (18108)
1	9	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., to Henry B. Dawson, May 3, 1887 (3436)
		<b>Letters, 1888-1891</b>
1	10	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., to Warren C. Crane, October 29, 1888 (BX8951)
1	10	William B. Hayden, Portland, Me., to Benson J. Lossing, [Dover Plains, N.Y.], November 2, 1888 (6734)
1	10	Benson J. Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., to C. C. Andrews, September 3, 1890 (draft) (7478)
1	10	E. H. Gross, Melrose, Mass., to Helen Lossing, Dover Plains, N.Y., July 30, 1891 (18107)
		<b>Correspondence with New York State Library, 1853-1857, 1875</b>
1	11	A.L.S. (copy). Henry A. Beal, January 14, 1853 (13701-1)
1	11	A.L.S. H. A. Raymond to J.V.L. Pruyn, [1856?] (13701-2)
1	11	A.L.S. John V. L. Pruyn to H. J. Raymond. April 18, 1856 (13701-3)
1	11	A.L.S. (Draft) Benson J. Lossing to J.V.L. Pruyn, May 1856 (13701-4)
1	11	A.L.S. (Draft) Benson J. Lossing to J.V.L. Pruyn, July 21, 1856 (13701-5)
1	11	A.L.S. John V. L. Pruyn to Benson J. Lossing, October 8, 1856 (13701-6)
1	11	A.L.S. Samuel B. Woolworth to Benson J. Lossing, February 7, 1857 (13701-7)
1	11	A.L.S. Henry A. Homes to Benson J. Lossing, February 2, 1875 (13701-8)
		<b>Photocopies of letters addressed to Lossing (original items are affixed inside books in the library's rare book collection)</b>
1	12	A.L.S. William Alexander Duer to Benson J. Lossing, February 28, 1852. The original item is found between front endpapers of <i>The Life of William Alexander, Earl of Stirling</i> by William Alexander Duer. (New Jersey Historical Society, 1847). N,973.309,A37d
1	12	A.L.S. Abram Duryée to Benson J. Lossing, New York, October 20, 1864, with attached A.N.S. of Franklin B. Hough. The original is attached to the front endpapers of <i>History of Duryée's Brigade ...</i> by Franklin B. Hough (Albany: J. Munsell, 1864). N,973.7416,H83
1	12	A.L.S. Frederic Kidder to Benson J. Lossing, Boston, October 26, 1868. The original item is attached to the front endpaper of <i>History of the First New</i>

Box	Folder	Description
		<i>Hampshire Regiment in the War of Rebellion</i> by Frederic Kidder (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1848). N,973.3442,K46
1	12	A.L.S. Henry T. Drowne to Benson J. Lossing, New York, June 12, 1872.
1	12	A.L.S. Charles L. Moreau to Benson J. Lossing, New York, May 29, 1872. The original items are attached at page 20 of <i>Journal of a Cruise in the Fall of 1780 in the Private-Sloop of War, Hope</i> by Henry T. Drowne. (New York: 1872) N,973.358,D78
1	13	Memoranda and notes in letters and orders of George Washington: 21 items (980)
1	14	Broadside and related notes on Lord Nottingham and Queen Anne's declaration of war against France and Spain; 2 items (876 and 877)
1	15	Letters of Edward Walker, 1847-1848, re: publishing and distribution of <i>The Young People's Mirror</i> ; some have been annotated by Lossing, who served as editor of the periodical (18081) a. A. N. B. Tompkins, January 1, 1847 b. John Ludlow, December 17, 1847 c. A. Wilbur, December 20, 1847 d. D. Clary, December 24, 1847 e. John Nimmo, December 27, 1847 f. George M. Murrell, December 30, 1847 g. Benoni Pearce, January 17, 1848 h. Eben N. Walton, January 24, 1848 i. L. H. Shute to B.J. Lossing, January 14, 1848 j. Clippings from periodicals (2 items)
		<b>Photographs</b>
1	16	Portrait of Theodore Bailey. 10.5 x 6 cm.
1	16	"Woodland," Hamilton residence, Philadelphia
1	16	"The Ridge," Lossing residence, Dover Plains, N.Y.
		<b>Miscellaneous</b>
1	17	Note concerning life of Rensselaer Schuyler, n.d. (926)
1	17	"The Van Kleek House," clipping from periodical signed by Benson J. Lossing
1	17	Broadside: Select and Valuable Works Forming Part of the Library of the Late Mr. [Robert] Balmanno on sale at 292 Grand Street, Brooklyn. 25 x 54 cm. (18459)
1	17	Inspection Report, August 18, 1862 (7246)
1	17	Invoice (receipt) of goods and services purchased by Benson Lossing from George T. Brown, merchant and tailor, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., July 3, 1866 (18081)
		<b>Letters: Benson J. Lossing to Isabella (Mrs. Thomas P.) James</b>
1	18	Benson, J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Isabella James, Philadelphia, Pa., April 29, 1864
1	18	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Isabella James, Philadelphia, Pa., May 6, 1864
1	18	Benson, J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Isabella James, Philadelphia, Pa., May 14, 1864

Box	Folder	Description
1	18	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Isabella James, Philadelphia, Pa., May 16, 1864
1	18	Benson, J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Isabella James, Philadelphia, Pa., July 30, 1864
		<b>Letters, etc., concerning the original manuscript of the Emancipation Proclamation</b> (See also Box 2, Folders 5 and 6)
1	19	John Nicolay, Executive Mansion, to Benson J. Lossing, July 15, 1863; regards Lossing's request to obtain a photograph of the Emancipation Proclamation
1	19	Benson J. Lossing, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Samuel Yorke Atlee, September 21, 1863; concerns request to obtain a photograph of the Emancipation Proclamation and envelope indicating the letter was forwarded to John Hay
1	19	Isaac N. Arnold, Washington, D.C., to Benson J. Lossing, December 10, 1863; regards sale of the proclamation at fair in Chicago
1	19	Note indicating the <i>New York Tribune</i> , November 20, [1863] reported that the original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation had been sold to Thomas B. Bryan for \$3,000.00 at Chicago Fair.
1	19	"Proclamation of Freedom" narrative written by Benson J. Lossing in regards to his acquisition of the aforesaid document, Poughkeepsie, November 2, 1863
2	1	"The Day We Celebrate." Benson J. Lossing [18-?]; 1 v., 16 p.; original manuscript article or speech on the Fourth of July; includes a portrait of Benson J. Lossing (11195)
2	2	Diary of Helen Sweet Lossing, December 2, 1855-October 8, 1856; 1 v., 92+ p. (17940)
2	3	Sketchbook, ca. 1830-ca. 1835; 1 v., ca. 120 p.; drawings and sketches were probably done by Benson J. Lossing while he was learning the art of wood engraving (BD19618)
2	4	Circular: "Lossing's Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution; or Illustrated by Pen and Pencil of History, Relics, and Traditions of the War of Independence ..." [New York: Harper and Bros., 1853]
		<b>Final Draft of the Emancipation Proclamation</b>
2	5	Manuscript facsimile of President Abraham Lincoln's draft of the final Emancipation Proclamation, 1 January 1863. The original manuscript was destroyed in the 1871 Chicago fire. (4 p.; original item is stored in the vault; photocopy in the collection)
2	6	Correspondence and other documents related to manuscript facsimile of the Emancipation Proclamation (original items in the vault): a) "Proclamation of Freedom," narrative written by Benson J. Lossing in regard to his acquisition of the aforesaid document, Poughkeepsie, 2 November 1863 b) Original postal cover, 30 October 1863 c) A.L.S. John Hay to Benson J. Lossing, 25 May 1881 d) A.N.S. Benson J. Lossing, 27 May 1881