

**GURLEY FAMILY  
PAPERS, 1862-1915****SC21620**

QUANTITY: 8 boxes (2.0 cubic ft.)  
ACCESS: Open to research  
ACQUISITION: Gift of Louise K. Williamson, March 1997  
PROCESSED BY: Fred Bassett, Senior Librarian, Manuscripts and Special Collections, April 1997

**Biographical Note:**

William Gurley was born in Troy, New York, March 16, 1822. He received his primary and secondary education at private schools before attending the Rensselaer Institute (now Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), and graduating in 1839 with a degree in civil engineering. Thereafter, he practiced surveying for several years before turning his attention to the manufacturing of scientific and mathematical instruments. He learned the trade in the shop of Oscar Hanks. In 1845, Gurley established his own scientific instrument manufacturing business in partnership with James Phelps. They bought the Hanks plant in 1852, which became their principal place of business. Lewis E. Gurley, the younger brother of William, joined the firm and eventually bought out the interest of James Phelps. Thus early was formed their industrial firm of the name W. & L.E. Gurley, situated for over a century on Fulton Street in Troy. The firm prospered greatly from government controls during the Civil War and postwar expansion of the market for its products throughout the world. During the 1870s, William Gurley traveled extensively in Europe, primarily for business reasons. In 1876 the firm sponsored an award-winning exhibit at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.

William Gurley also was involved in many civic and philanthropic endeavors in Troy. For many years he served as president of the board of trustees of the Young Men's Association, which was the principal cultural organization in the city. Gurley also figured prominently in the financial operations of the Emma Willard School and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

William Gurley married Maria Ruth Kenney (1827-1894) of Troy, June 24, 1847. They had five children. Their first child, Clara Augusta Gurley (1849-?), married Dr. Nicholas Williamson (1845-1902) of New Brunswick, New Jersey, June 2, 1881. Dr. Williamson was a practicing physician and also served as mayor of his native city. The second child of William and Mary R.K. Gurley, Esther (Hettie) Maria (1853-1892), married Paul Cook of Troy; Cook eventually became president of the W. & L.E. Gurley Company. William Gurley died January 10, 1887.

**Scope and Contents Note:**

The Gurley Family Papers consist chiefly of letters, diaries, and photographs that offer a glimpse of the personal and professional lives of various members of a once prominent family of Troy, New York. The bulk of materials are centered on Clara Gurley Williamson, the oldest daughter of William and Ruth Kenney Gurley. Included are many letters to Clara from her parents and

siblings regarding personal and family matters. In addition, Clara received many letters from a friend, Sarah Cook of New Brunswick, New Jersey. Her activities and experiences depict the social life and customs of the time. Clara's diaries offer perceptive observations of her social circle.

There are also many letters not directly related to Clara, including several letters written by William Gurley to his brother, Lewis, from Europe that provide invaluable insight into the operations of the nineteenth-century scientific instrument industry. Also included are the diaries of Maria R.K. Gurley and the draft of the last will and testament of William Gurley.

Photographs, comprising almost half the collection, include many studio portraits of William Gurley and other family members taken in the 1870s through the 1890s. The bulk of the photographs, however, feature the family of Paul and Esther (Hettie) Gurley Cook. Included are several exterior and interior views of their residence, known as Elmhurst, which was situated in the Lansingburgh section of Troy near the boundary line with the Town of Brunswick.

### Box and Folder List:

Box	Folder(s)	Contents
1	1	Genealogy and Family History
		<b>Letters</b>
1	2	Letters: William Gurley to family, 1875
1	3	Letters: William Gurley to Lewis E. Gurley, 1875
1	4	Letters: William Gurley to Paul Cook, 1875
1	5	Letters: Maria R.K. Gurley to William Gurley, 1880
1	6-7	Letters: William and Maria R.K. Gurley to Clara Gurley, 1872-1875
1	8-10	Letters: William Gurley to Clara Gurley Williamson, 1880-1886
1	11	Letters: Maria R.K. Gurley to Clara Gurley Williamson, 1889-1890
1	12	Letters: Maria R.K. Gurley to Esther (Hettie) and Paul Cook
2	1	Letters: Sarah Cook to Clara A. Gurley, 1864-1865
2	2-3	Letters: Sarah Cook to Clara A. Gurley, 1866
2	4-5	Letters: Sarah Cook to Clara A. Gurley, 1867
2	6-7	Letters: Sarah Cook to Clara A. Gurley, 1870
2	8-10	Letters: Sarah Cook to Clara A. Gurley, 1871
2	11	Letters: Sarah Cook to Clara A. Gurley, 1872
2	12-13	Letters: Sarah Cook to Clara A. Gurley, 1873
2	14	Letters: Sarah Cook to Clara A. Gurley, 1875
3	1	Letters: Nicholas Williamson to Clara Gurley Williamson, 1886-1902
3	2	Letters: Nicholas Williamson to family, 1880-1894
3	3	Letters: Lewis E. Gurley to Clara Gurley Williamson, 1875-1891
3	4	Letters: Esther (Hettie) Gurley Cook to Clara Gurley Williamson, 1870-1890
3	5	Letters: Paul Cook to Clara Gurley Williamson, 1902-1912
3	6	Miscellaneous family letters
3	7	Essay: "A Summer Trip to California," by Clara Gurley, October 1876

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder(s)</b>	<b>Contents</b>
3	8	Copy of the last will and testament of William Gurley, 1875
3	9	Financial statements of W. & L.E. Gurley Co., 1911-1914
3	10	Invoices of W. & L.E. Gurley Co., 1906-1915
3	11	Report of the mayor of the City of New Brunswick, New Jersey to the Common Council, May 3, 1897. Nicholas Williamson, Mayor
3	12	Miscellaneous legal papers
		<b>Diaries</b>
4	1	Diary of Maria R.K. Gurley, December 29, 1862-October 20, 1866
4	2	Diary of Maria R.K. Gurley, October 29, 1866-September 24, 1876
4	3	Diary of Clara Gurley, while in Woodford, August 1863
4	4	Diary of Clara Gurley, September 11, 1873-November 16, 1874
4	5	Diary of Clara Gurley, November 28, 1874-May 4, 1876
4	6	Diary of Clara Gurley, June 1, 1876-February 7, 1878
		<b>Photographs</b>
5	1	William Gurley a.) Portrait, n.d. (Irving Photographer, Troy, N.Y.) b.) Portrait, 1882 (Lloyd, Troy, N.Y.)
5	2	Maria K. Gurley Portrait, 1881 (Clark, New Brunswick, N.J.)
5	3	Lewis E. Gurley a.) Portrait, 1801 (Clark Photographer, Troy, N.Y.) b.) Portrait, n.d. (Lloyd Art Studio, Troy, N.Y.)
5	4	William Frank Gurley Portrait, n.d. (Hardy & Van Arnam, Troy, N.Y.)
5	5	Clara Gurley Williamson a.) Portrait, ca. 1860s (Loudon School of Photography) b.) Portrait, 1881 (Zeph F. Magill, Troy, N.Y.)
5	6	Williamson Family a.) Clara G. Williamson with first child, 1882 (Irving, Troy, N.Y.) b.) Clara Clouston Williamson and George Cook, ca. 1888 c.) Nicholas Williamson with Mary and Charles, 1902
5	7	Nicholas and Clara Gurley Williamson Portrait, n.d. (D. Clark Studio, New Brunswick, N.J.)
5	8	[Williamson Family?] Portrait, ca. 1880s (D. Clark Studio, New Brunswick, N.J.)
5	9	Paul and Esther (Hettie) Gurley Cook family portraits a.) Sarah, Margaret, George, and William (Lloyd, Troy, N.Y.) b.) [Esther, George, Sarah, William, and Margaret] (Lloyd, Troy, N.Y.)
5	10	Charles A. Kenney portrait
5	11	a.) Portrait of Sarah Cook b.) Family trip to Norway
5	12	a.) Family gathering of Elmhurst, 1888 b.) Unidentified portrait
5	13	Unidentified, 5 items

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder(s)</b>	<b>Contents</b>
5	14	Unidentified infant
5	15	Horse and buggy on a country road (persons and location not identified)
5	16	Residence of Harry L. and Mary M. Gurley Beveridge, Hamilton, Ohio, December 1892 a.) Reception Room b.) Dining Room c.) Library
5	17	Emma Willard School, Troy, N.Y.
		<b>Portrait Album</b>
6	1	William Cook (son of Paul and Esther Gurley Cook)
6	2	Sarah W. Cook (daughter of Paul and Esther Gurley Cook)
6	3	Sarah, Margaret, Will and George Cook
6	4	Sarah, Margaret, George and their nurse
6	5	Sarah and Margaret Cook
6	6	Family party at "Elmhurst," Cooks and Gurleys
6	7	Paul Cook, [William Gurley], and William Cook
6	8	Mantle at Elmhurst
6	9	Margaret Cook
6	10	Unidentified
6	11	Unidentified
6	12	Unidentified
6	13	Unidentified
6	14	Margaret Cook
6	15	Clara Gurley Williamson with Charles Williamson
6	16	Clara Gurley Williamson and children
		<b>Album: "Elmhurst"</b>
7	1	Plates 1 and 2 a.) "Entrance" b.) "Porte cochire" [front view at house] c.) "South Side" d.) [View of the back side of the house]
7	2	Plates 3 and 4 a.) "Up from the Woods" b.) "North West" (view of the house) c.) "Carriage house" d.) "Margaret and Katy"
7	3	Plates 5 and 6 a.) "Mother and Charles" [Maria R.K. Gurley and Charles Kenney] b.) "Tennis Lawn" c.) "C.A.K." [Charles A. Kenney] d.) "South West Corner" [porch scene]
7	4	Plates 7 and 8 a.) "A Group" b.) "In October"

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder(s)</b>	<b>Contents</b>
		c.) "G.H.C. 2 <sup>nd</sup> " [George H. Cook, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ] d.) "Thanksgiving Party"
7	5	Plates 9 and 10 a.) "A.W.L. & Margaret" b.) "A.W.L. & E.M.G.C." c.) "By Sitting Room Window" d.) "W.G.C." [William Gurley Cook]
7	6	Plates 11 and 12 a.) "South West" b.) "Path through the Woods" c.) "South of West" [bird's-eye view of Troy, N.Y.] d.) "West View" [bird's-eye view of Troy, N.Y.]
7	7	Plates 13, 14, and 15 a.) "North West" b.) "From the Roof looking North" c.) "Pine House" d.) "On the River Road" e.) "From the West Door"
		<b>Photographs</b> (folio size)
8	1	Cyrus Kenney, 1870
8	2	Dedication of the Gurley Memorial, Troy, N.Y.
8	3	William Gurley

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