



# ArchivesSpace

a community served by †Lyrasis

## James Harper papers 7299068

---

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on January 13, 2025.  
Description is written in: English.

Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Butler Library, 6th Floor  
Columbia University, Mail Code 1127  
535 W. 114th St.  
New York, NY 10027  
Business Number: (212) 854-5153  
Fax Number: (212) 854-1365  
[rbml@libraries.cul.columbia.edu](mailto:rbml@libraries.cul.columbia.edu)  
URL: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/rbml/index.html>

---

## Table of Contents

---

Summary Information .....	3
Biographical / Historical .....	3
Summary .....	5
Arrangement .....	5
Administrative Information .....	5
Related Materials .....	7
Controlled Access Headings .....	7
Collection Inventory .....	7
Series I: Photographs, circa .....	7
Series II: Correspondence .....	8
Series III: Miscellaneous .....	9
Series IV: Books .....	9
Subseries IV.1: Books owned by Harper Family .....	9
Subseries IV.2: Bibles owned by Harper Family .....	10
Subseries IV.3: Books printed by Harper & Brothers .....	10

---

## Summary Information

---

<b>Repository:</b>	Rare Book and Manuscript Library
<b>Creator:</b>	Harper, James, 1795-1869
<b>Title:</b>	James Harper papers
<b>ID:</b>	7299068
<b>ID:</b>	MS#1479
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1800-1925
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4.59 linear feet 5 document boxes 2 record cartons 1 oversize box
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .
<b>Abstract:</b>	The collection consists of diverse materials, photographs, correspondence and legal papers documenting the history of Harper family. The collection also includes books owned by members of the Harper family and books published by Harper & Brothers.

### Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); James Harper Papers; Box and Folder (if known); Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Biographical / Historical

---

Harper & Brothers was one of most prestigious American printing houses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The original company, named J&J Harper, was established in 1817 in offices on Dover Street in New York by the two eldest of the four Harper brothers, James and John. The brothers were the sons of an English Methodist schoolmaster and carpenter who settled in Newtown, New York in 1740. Though James and John started the company, other members of the Harper family soon became involved in the business. After being apprentices for several years, the two younger brothers, Joseph Wesley and Fletcher, were included into the firm, which became in 1833 Harper Brothers with offices and printing house at 81 and 82 Cliff Street, New York. James, the eldest of the brothers, was perceived as the nominal head of

the company while Fletcher was recognized as the authentic head of the business. James was the initiator of Harper's Magazine while Fletcher controlled the business and was responsible for the Weekly and the Bazaar. In 1844 James was also elected mayor of New York. He was a prominent figure of New York political life and enjoyed an exceptional repute. He died in a carriage accident in 1869.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Biographical / Historical

---

After the death or retirement of the founders, the sons and grand-sons of the original Harper brothers continued their legacy. The later generations continued the tradition of coordinating the business as a family company under the strict rule of non acceptance of partners unrelated with the family. Until the middle of the twentieth century the company remained under the sole authority of the Harper family descendents. As directly instructed by Fletcher, the youngest of the first four initiators of the firm, all the sons entering the family business had to receive the highest education and after traveling through Europe for the purpose of learning foreign languages they had to enter the composition room. Under the direction of the foreman they had to learn to set a page as any compositor in the office and be able to earn a living in case of any vicissitudes.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Biographical / Historical

---

In 1896, at the death of the last survivor of the second generation of Harpers, Philip Jacob Arcularius, the firm was under the control of seven cousins, each with separate responsibilities in a distinct department. Philip, born on October 21st 1824 was the son of James, one of the four founders of the company. He married Harriet Meade (Hyde) on June 30th 1846 and had a son James born in 1847. James married Lillie Mercein (Hyde) and had a son James Harper Jr. (1879 -1944) and a daughter Lillie Hyde Harper (1881-1941). James Harper Jr. married Helen Leale and had a son, James Harper (Jamie) born on 4th of July 1919. The present collection reflects mainly the lives of these members of Harper family and of the families related to them.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Summary

---

The collection is composed of photographs, letters, diaries, legal documents, books and personal items from the estate of Helen Leale Harper Jr., great-great-grand daughter of James Harper, one of the four brothers that founded Harper & Brothers. Some of the items in the collection are albums, photographs and Bibles recording the history of Harper family in-laws--the Copcutt, Meade, Hyde and Leale families. While part of the collection's articles document Harper firm activity, others are miscellaneous personal chronicle items as: letters, drawings, locks of hair, diaries and photographs. Some of the items of particular historic value include the marriage certificate of James Harper and Maria Arcularius, Bibles belonging to Philip Harper, James Harper and Copcutt family - with records of births, marriages and deaths in the family, and books printed by the Harper and Brothers firm in the first years of activity.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Arrangement

---

This collection is arranged in four series.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Administrative Information

---

### Publication Statement

Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Butler Library, 6th Floor  
Columbia University, Mail Code 1127  
535 W. 114th St.

New York, NY 10027

Business Number: (212) 854-5153

Fax Number: (212) 854-1365

[rbml@libraries.cul.columbia.edu](mailto:rbml@libraries.cul.columbia.edu)

URL: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/rbml/index.html>

### **Revision Description**

xml document instance created by Carrie Hintz. EAD was imported spring 2019 as part of the ArchivesSpace Phase II migration. 2010-04-07 2019-05-20

### **Restrictions on Access**

This collection is located on site.

### **Restrictions on Access**

This collection has no restrictions.

### **Terms Governing Use and Reproduction**

Reproductions may be made for research purposes. The RBML maintains ownership of the physical material only. Copyright remains with the creator and his/her heirs. The responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Source of acquisition--James Cummins Booksellers. Method of acquisition--Purchase; Date of acquisition--July, 2009.

### **Ownership and Custodial History**

All items in the collection from the estate of Helen Leale Harper, Jr.

### **Processing Information**

Papers processed Cella Peterson, Pratt Institute School of Library and Information Science 12/2009.

### **Processing Information**

Finding aid written Cella Peterson, Pratt Institute School of Library and Information Science 12/2009.

### **Accruals**

Materials may have been added to the collection since this finding aid was prepared. Contact [rbml@columbia.edu](mailto:rbml@columbia.edu) for more information.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Related Materials

---

### Selected Related Material-- At Columbia

[Harper & Bros. Records, 1817-1929](#) Rare Book & Manuscript Library

### Selected Related Material-- At Columbia

[Harper & Row, Publishers Records, 1935-1973.](#) Rare Book & Manuscript Library

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Controlled Access Headings

---

- Literature publishing
- Publishers and publishing -- New York (State) -- New York
- Correspondence
- Photographs
- Bible records
- Publishers and publishing
- Harper, Lillie Hyde, 1881-1941
- Harper, James, 1795-1869

---

## Collection Inventory

---

### Series I: Photographs, circa, 1800-1920

#### Scope and Contents

This series is composed of three photograph albums with typical nineteenth century photographic portraits, one recording the Harper-Hyde-Meade branch of the family and the others with portraits of the Leale- Copcutt family members. Four folders of this series contain framed pictures from the beginning of nineteenth century, portraits of Philip A. Harper, from the end of nineteenth century, and pictures of various groups of people, including members and friends of the family, from nineteenth century. Philip A Harper's folder contains pictures of family members and of the family residence in Far Rockaway. Some of the portrait pictures are captioned on the back, but the majority of the group pictures are hard to identify because of either the lack of captioning or a mere mention of a familial relationship or date and event. The folders in this series are arranged chronologically.

Title/Description	Instances
Photo album Harper family, late Nineteenth Century	box 1 folder 1

Framed photo, circa, 1800	box 1	folder 2
Photos - Philip A. Harper, circa, 1800	box 1	folder 3
Photos - Leale-Copcutt family, late Nineteenth - early Twentieth Century	box 1	folder 4
Photo album Leale-Copcutt family, Nineteenth Century	box 2	folder 1
Various photos, circa 1800 to 1920, 1800, 1920	box 2	folder 2
Various photos, 1881-1923	box 2	folder 3
James Harper, Oversize photograph portrait, 1869	box 8	

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series II: Correspondence, 1882-1952

### Scope and Contents

The items in this series are mainly personal letters of family members, some business letters and three folders of sympathy notes related to the death of James Harper, in January 1944. Two folders contain artist's Lillie Hyde Harper (1881-1941) letters addressed to her brother James, from various European countries, written while she was studying arts in France, in the 1920s. This series contains also letters from Philip a Harper to his grand-mother Maria Arcularius (founder James Harper's mother) and from Ralph Mead to his son-in-law Philip Harper. The folders in this series are also arranged chronologically.

Title/Description	Instances	
Miscellaneous Harper Family Correspondence, 1854-1882	box 3	folder 1
Harper, James, Jr.		
Childhood correspondence, 1884-1890	box 3	folder 2
To Mr. and Mrs. James [and Lillie Mercein] Harper (his parents), 1910	box 3	folder 3
Philip J.A. Harper .		
Sawyer, Robert H. to Philip Harper, 1858-1861	box 3	folder 4
Mead, Ralph to Philip Harper, 1862	box 3	folder 5
Harper, Philip General Correspondence, 1858-1893	box 3	folder 6
Harper, Lillie Hyde to James Harper and family, 1923-1927 <u>Physical Description:</u> (3 Folders)	box 3	folder 7 to 9
Helen Leale Harper correspondence and mementos, 1944-1952	box 3	folder 10
James Harper- Sympathy Cards, January-August 1944	box 4	folder 1 to 3



Physical Description: (3 Folders)

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

### Series III: Miscellaneous, 1818-1919

#### Scope and Contents

This series is composed of six folders, chronologically organized, of legal papers, diaries and pamphlets, and two over-size folders holding drawings and news-papers. This series includes: Maria Arcularius's diary documenting her trip to Europe in 1835, James Harper Jr.'s baby book, from 1919 (containing a genealogical tree), locks of hair, and short notes of a personal nature. One of the pamphlets in this series is the centennial commemorative 1917 advertisement of the reprint of the first work by Harper printers, *Seneca's Morals* with facsimile pages from the first edition and letter with a sample reservation note from the company. This pamphlet reveals the fact that Joseph Wesley Harper and Fletcher Harper, the two younger brothers of the four founders, worked on the first printed Harper book, in 1817, as compositors. One folder of this series contains a tentative genealogical outline of one branch of Harper family and a history of family names of English origin (Harper included); the author of both documents is not mentioned. Particularly interesting and revealing, of the history of the family, are the clippings from new papers of several obituaries for the death of Philip A. Harper (a second generation); these short articles from the press of the time brings light into the complicated genealogy and succession of Harpers.

Title/Description	Instances	
Legal papers, 1818-1823	box 5	folder 1
Maria Arcularius Harper, diary, 1 1822-1835	box 5	folder 2
Pamphlets, 1844-circa 1850	box 5	folder 3
Prospectus, Seneca reediting, 1917	box 5	folder 4
James Harper Jr., baby book, 1919	box 5	folder 5
Miscellaneous, circa, 1900	box 5	folder 6
News-papers, oversize Folder, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century	box 8	
Drawings, Twentieth Century	box 8	

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

### Series IV: Books, 1808-1916

#### Scope and Contents

This series is comprised of books owned or published by the Harper Family.

#### Subseries IV.1: Books owned by Harper Family, 1808-1916

##### Scope and Contents

Sub-series IV.1 Books owned by members of Harper family. This sub-series contains two categories of books: general knowledge and bibles, from as early as 1808 to 1912. The general knowledge books are

of various subjects as children's book, Italian grammar, or *Shakespeare and the Precious Stones* (signed by the author). The three Bibles belonging to James Harper, Philip Harper and Copcutt family contain some record notes of births, marriages and deaths in the family.

Title/Description	Instances
<i>Imitation of Christ</i> John Wesley, 1808	box 6
The book of common prayer, 1818	box 6
<i>Ring - a - round - a - Rosy</i> Mary A. Lathbury, 1885	box 6
<i>Elementary Italian grammar</i> Pietro Motti, 1912	box 6
<i>Shakespeare and precious stones</i> George Frederick Kunz, 1916	box 6

### Subseries IV.2: Bibles owned by Harper Family, 1842-1855

Title/Description	Instances
Cupcutt family Bible, 1842	box 6
Philip J.A. Harper Bible, 1846	box 6
James Harper's Bible, 1855	box 6

### Subseries IV.3: Books printed by Harper & Brothers, 1817-1896

#### Scope and Contents

Sub-series IV.3 Books printed by J&J Harper and Harper & Brothers. The topics of the six books that constitute this sub-series also varies from geography to geology, fairy-tales to Christian philosophy. The books date from 1817 to 1893, and illustrate the craftsmanship of the printing enterprise founded by Harper brothers.

Title/Description	Instances
<i>A series of discourses on he Christian revelation viewed in connexion with the modern astronomy</i> , Thomas Chalmers, 1817	box 7
<i>An essay concerning human understanding</i> John Locke, 1818	box 7
<i>The fairy book</i> , 1853	box 7
<i>A tour around New York and my summer acre</i> John Flavel Mines, 1893	box 7
<i>The Danube from the Black Forest to the Black Sea</i> D. Millet, 1893	box 7
<i>The Student's Lyell</i> edited by John W. Judd, 1896	box 7

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)