

Enoch Pratt Papers

MS15.1

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Enoch Pratt Free Library Special Collections
1852-1896
<http://www.prattlibrary.org/>
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Summary Information

Repository	Enoch Pratt Free Library Special Collections
Creator	Enoch, Pratt, 1808-1896
Title	Enoch Pratt Papers
Date	1852-1896
Extent	3.1 Linear feet
Language	English

Biographical note

Enoch Pratt (September 10, 1808-September 17, 1896) was born in North Middleborough, Massachusetts, the son of farmers, Issac Pratt and Naomi Keith. Mr. Pratt was known for being industrious and frugal, and he excelled early in the world of business.

Despite arriving in Baltimore with only \$150 to his name, he soon established himself as an iron commission merchant, dealing in mule shoes and nails.

He spent the next years of his life making his fortune in business:

E. Pratt & Brothers - Iron Commission merchant located at 23-25 South Charles Street; Vice president of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad; Director of Susquehanna Canal Company; President of the National Farmers' and Planters' bank of Baltimore (he would hold this position for the rest of his life); gained a controlling interest in the Maryland Steamboat Company.

Mr. Pratt was a well known and important businessman in his own day, but most people remember him now because of the many gifts he gave to the public. He and his wife Maria Louisa Hyde had no children and it was one of the great sorrows of his life, but he decided to devote much of his time and fortune to helping people. Maybe the most important of these projects was the Enoch Pratt Free Library itself. Mr. Pratt believed strongly in equal opportunity. As a young man he had attended a free public school and he did not wish to now spend his fortune on the few rich. What Baltimore needed, he said, was:

“...a free circulating public library, open to all citizens regardless of property or color.” The Enoch Pratt Free Library was opened in January of 1886 with 32,000 volumes, four branch libraries, and a \$1,058,333.00 endowment for upkeep and expansion. No less a figure than famous philanthropist Andrew Carnegie saw Enoch Pratt as his pioneer.

Scope and Contents note

The Enoch Pratt Papers include both correspondence and ephemera relating to the conception and creation of the Enoch Pratt Free Library. The collection also documents his continued involvement at the Pratt Library after he appointed L.H. Steiner as director. The ephemera includes some insight into his other philanthropic endeavors, particularly the creation of a free school in Massachusetts and his partnership with Moses Shepard in the creation of the Shepard Pratt Hospital of Baltimore. The ephemera also offers a glimpse into Pratt's private life through dinner invitations and personal items such as a passport, photographs and his wife's library card. More information on the institutional history of the Enoch Pratt Free Library can be obtained by consulting the collections of Lewis H. Steiner and Bernard C. Steiner.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Enoch Pratt Free Library Special Collections 1852-1896

Revision Description

Entered into Archivist Toolkit by Joan M. Wolk. November, 2015

Conditions Governing Use note

Unrestricted, open by appointment.

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- clippings (information artifacts)
- Correspondence
- Ephemera
- Letters
- memorabilia
- newspapers
- Photographs

Personal Name(s)

- Huidekofer, F.
- Janes, Henry
- Knight, John
- Steiner, Bernard C. (Bernard Christian), 1867-1926
- Steiner, Lewis H. (Lewis Henry), 1827-1892
- Thurston, C. B.
- Winchester, Marshall

Institutional History

1882 January 21-Enoch Pratt offered a gift to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore of a Central library, four branch libraries, and an endowment of \$1,058,333.00.

"My library," Mr. Pratt is attributed to have said, "shall be for all, rich and poor without distinction of race or color, who, when properly accredited, can take out the books if they will handle them carefully and return them." Later that year, the City of Baltimore accepted Pratt's gift, and Baltimore citizens voted their approval on October 25, 1882.

1883-The Pratt Library's Board of Trustees organized with Enoch Pratt as President.

1884 November-The Board of Trustees chose Lewis H. Steiner to be the first Librarian (i.e., Director) of the Pratt Library.

1885 February 25-The Pratt Library purchased its first books, and Charles Evans, Assistant Librarian, began to catalog them.

1886 January 5-The Central Library on Mulberry Street opened.

Within the next three months, the Pratt Library would open: Branch 4 (at Canton and O'Donnell Streets - the Canton Branch still exists today); Branch 3 (at Light and Gittings Streets); Branch 2 (at Hollins and Calhoun Streets); Branch 1 (at Fremont and Pitcher Streets); October 15: the Pratt Library issued a borrowers card to Harry S. Cummings of 935 North Eutaw Street. He was the first African American to have a Pratt Library card.

1895-1906-The Central Library undertook its first major technological upgrades: electric (versus gas) lighting (1895-1898); in-house and long-distance telephones (1900-1903); typewriters for the Cataloging Department (1903); connection to the City's sewer system (1906); 1896-Peabody Heights, Branch 6, at 2521 St. Paul Street opened. Land for this branch was donated by Enoch Pratt, who supervised its construction until his death. The Peabody Heights Branch closed in 1997.

Series I: Correspondence, 1852-1896

Collection Inventory

Series I: Correspondence, 1852-1896	Box	Folder
	1	1-9
	Box	Folder
Mr. Donaldson	1	1
F. Huidekofer	1	2
John Knight	1	3
Dr. Steiner [unspecified]	1	4
Bernard C. Steiner	1	5
Lewis H. Steiner	1	6
C. B. Thurston	1	7
Marshall Winchester	1	8
General	1	9
Andrew Carnegie, Letter from Andrew Carnegie to the Secretary of the Pratt Library, October 23, 1889 10/23/1889	1	11
Series II: In Honor of Enoch Pratt, 1889	Box	Folder
	1	10

Series III: Ephemera

	Box	Folder
Arbor Day [April 10, 1889]	1	10
Series III: Ephemera	Box 2	Folder 1-4
Library items	Box 2	Folder 1
Wallet with admission card to Library Academy of Music opening, 1886, autographed by E. P.; plus note with multiple signatures of Pratt (?) with donor letter from Penny Colby	2	2
2 invitations to Academy of Music opening, 1886	2	2
Playing card with E. P. signature	2	2
US Quarter Dollar from 1854, stamped with "E. Pratt"	2	2
Mrs. Pratt's calling card	2	2
Check made out to and endorsed by Enoch Pratt, 1864; plus note from donor	2	2
Letter of condolence to Mrs. Pratt from the National Union Bank, Nov. 5th, 1896	2	2
Enoch Pratt-Personal & Business Images	2	2

Series IV: E. Pratt & Bros.

Signature cut from letter	2	2
1827 photograph of house standing on the site of Pratt's birth; gift of Mrs. Susanah K. Pratt by Mr. Perry	2	2
3 Photo-cards (4x6.5") of elder Mr. Pratt	2	3
2 small photographs of Pratt in his middle years	2	3
Photocard (4x6.5") semi-profile of Mr. Pratt	2	3
3 copies of Halwig photograph of Mr. Pratt seated, 1894, plus donor note	2	3
Silhouette of "Mr. Pratt at age 40"	2	3
Composite portrait of young Mr. Pratt (8.5x11")	2	3
2 photographs of Enoch Pratt n.d.	2	3
Press	2	4
Series IV: E. Pratt & Bros.	Box 2	Folder 5-8
	Box	Folder
2 photographs and copy of E. Pratt & Brother (Counting House), c. 1890, with identification of subjects in front of building	2	5
Henry Janes, Enoch Pratt's attorney (Letters)	2	5

Series V: Photographs and Misc. Ephemera

John Knight (Letters, 1861-1864)	2	6
John Knight (Letters, 1860)	2	7
John Knight (Letters, 1852-1859)	2	8
Series V: Photographs and Misc. Ephemera		Box 2-7
	Box	Folder
Miscellaneous	2	9
		Box
Beaded band (48") made for Enoch Pratt, 1832		3
	Box	Folder
Catalogue of the Trustees... of Bridgewater Academy, 1823; poster and copy	3	1
Photo card (4x6"), plus 4 copies of engraved image (based on same photo) with signature (1 mounted); plus note by anonymous donor of one image	3	2
Photograph of Mr. Pratt's oil portrait by Dabour (mounted)	3	3
Photographs of the bust of Enoch Pratt (mounted)	3	4
Photograph of the Bas Relief of Head of Enoch Pratt	3	4
	Map-case	Drawer

Series V: Photographs and Misc. Ephemera

Enoch Pratt with signatures of Pratt and the artist	1	3
Photograph of Enoch Pratt standing	1	3
2 Photographs of Enoch Pratt, seated with braid, damaged original, plus copy	1	3
2 Sketches of Enoch Pratt Memorial Tablet	1	3
Printed Address of Enoch Pratt at Opening Ceremony	1	3
		Box
Enoch Pratt Accessories: Passports, Daguerreotypes, ALA ribbon, St. Louis, 1889		4
Enoch Pratt Accessories: Paperweight & Inkwell		5
Keys to Enoch Pratt's Counting House and Office No. 23 South Charles Street		6
Monographed Letter Opener belonging to Enoch Pratt		7
Letter to Enoch Pratt of September 10, 1891 celebrating his 83rd birthday		7
Enoch Pratt's cane		8