

The Pryce Lewis Collection
MSS Collection #006

Scope & Content

This collection, numbering approximately 200 items, contains primary documents, correspondence, photographs, and news clippings concerning the career of Pryce Lewis, an employee of Pinkerton's Detective Agency during and after the Civil War. In addition, it contains publication and research materials written by Dr. Harriet Schoen about Pryce Lewis.

Dates

1830-2011

Availability

The collection is open for research.

Biographical Note

Pryce Lewis was born in 1835 in Newton, Wales, where his father owned a woolen mill on the River Severn. He emigrated to the United States in 1856. During the Civil War, he was employed by Pinkerton's Detective Agency and worked as a Union spy in Richmond. Captured and sentenced to be hanged, he managed to escape death because of his British citizenship. After his release, he served as bailiff and special detective officer of Old Capitol and Carroll prisons until the end of the war.

In 1868, he married Maria Thwaites, and they had two children: Mary and Arthur. During this period of his life he was working in Chicago in a detective agency which he had founded with William H. Scott. Later, Lewis and Scott moved their operation to New York City, where they continued to operate until Scott's death. Lewis became embroiled in the A.T. Stewart case, working first for one side, then for the other because his first employer failed to pay him.

Lewis finally went to work for the Equitable Life Assurance Society. A few years later, a shake-up occurred in the business and he lost his job causing him to live a hand-to-mouth existence, supported largely by friends. He was not eligible for a pension because he had never become an American citizen. Efforts were made to get him a room at the Soldiers Home at Kearney, N.J., but there were difficulties with that because being a spy, he had not actually been a member of the armed forces. Finally, on December 6, 1911, Pryce Lewis committed suicide by jumping 365 feet from the top of the Pulitzer Building.

Extent

6 boxes, 1.31 linear feet

Language of the Materials

English

Arrangement

Box 1

- Series 1. Memoirs of Pryce Lewis as told to David Cronin (copies)

Box 2

- Series 2. Correspondence of Pryce Lewis and his contemporaries. Arranged chronologically.
- Series 3. Legal documents concerning Pryce Lewis. Arranged chronologically.
- Series 4. Biographical material on Lewis and his family.
- Series 5. Photographs

Box 3

- Series 6. Research notes of Harriet Schoen. Arranged by subject.
- Series 7. Research correspondence of Harriet Schoen. Arranged by correspondent, then chronologically.

Box 4

- Series 8. Materials written for publication by Harriet Schoen.
- Series 9. Correspondence of Harriet Schoen concerning publication of her Pryce Lewis material.
- Series 10. Miscellaneous.

Box 5

- Series 8. Materials written for publication by Harriet Schoen. (copies)

Box 6

- Series 1. Memoirs of Pryce Lewis as told to David Cronin (originals)
- Series 11. Info on the 2011 book written by Gavin Mortimer

Provenance

This collection was given to Harriet Schoen by Lewis' daughter, Mary. Schoen's papers were then gifted to the St. Lawrence Historical Association. St. Lawrence University received the papers from the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, who broke up the larger collection of Schoen's papers.

Processing Information

Processed by the St. Lawrence University Libraries Special Collections staff.

Repository Details

Part of the St. Lawrence University Libraries manuscript collection.

Contact:

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Collection Organization

Series 1 contains three notebooks about the life and of Lewis Pryce, including photocopies of the books.

Series 2 includes letters and telegrams ranging from 1858 to 1911 with some undated. Some correspondence is accompanied by its envelope. There are notes and transcriptions included with some letters that were produced by Schoen.

Series 3 are legal documents concerning Price Lewis dated 1861-1900. Some documents include notes made by Schoen. Documents contained in this series include passes through army lines and his marriage certificate.

Series 4 contains biographical material on Lewis (including several obituaries) and his family. There are letters and documents concerning relatives of Maria Thwaites Lewis with biographical notes from Schoen. Family members include Francis H. Pryce, and Albert, Peter and Josiah Thwaites.

Series 5 is a series of photographs including those used as illustrations in Schoen's untitled manuscript and a photo album with with Pryce Lewis, Spy for the Union stamped on cover.

Series 6 contains the research notes of Harriet Schoen including biographical notes, notes on Lewis during the war, and notes about the A. T. Stewart case.

Series 7 are research correspondence of Harriet Schoen which included articles and information with dates from 1862. People with whom Schoen corresponded are W. Barrett Brown, Ralph Dudley, S.L. England, Colonel Louis Sigaud, Armitage Watkins, and Pryce Lewis' daughter, Mary Lewis. There is also a miscellaneous category which includes correspondence with various universities and archives.

Series 8 consists of materials written for publication by Harriet Schoen, including manuscripts titled Pryce Lewis, Spy for the Union, Pryce Lewis and the A.T. Stewart Heirs, and Lace and Bones.

Series 9 contain Harriet Schoen's correspondence in attempts to get her materials on Pryce Lewis published. Those with whom she corresponded include E.P. Dutton Co., Jim Horan, and Mavis McIntosh.

Series 10 houses some miscellaneous articles and poems as well as photocopies of Schoen's manuscripts and several diaries.

Series 11 contains articles and a press release about the book The True Story of Lewis Pryce, the Civil War's Most Daring Spy, by Gavin Mortimer.

Related Collections

Call Number	Title
Mss. Coll. No. 002	Beach Papers
Mss. Coll. No. 056	Goodrich Papers
Mss. Coll. No. 064	Conkey - Bannister - Page Family Papers
Mss. Coll. No. 066	George O. Newbury Letters
Mss. Coll. No. 082	William H. Carr Diary
Mss. Coll. No. 083	William H. Davies Collection
Mss. Coll. No. 084	Orson Leroy Reynolds Collection
Mss. Coll. No. 085	Civil War Diary
Mss. Coll. No. 093	Wetherell Family Papers
Mss. Coll. No. 095	Robert Gilmore Papers
Mss. Coll. No. 125	Graves Family Correspondence
Mss. Coll. No. 126	Sunderland Family Correspondence
Mss. Coll. No. 129	Knapp Family Correspondence
Mss. Coll. No. 133	16 th New York Infantry Regiment Records
Mss. Coll. No. 137	George S. Parsons Correspondence
Mss. Coll. No. 138	Columbus Huntly Correspondence
Mss. Coll. No. 139	Crossman Family Papers
Mss. Coll. No. 174	Henry D. Payne Memoir
Mss. Coll. No. 191	Lewis Murray Civil War Memoir