

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Calvin Pardee was born on July 17, 1841 in Hazleton, Pennsylvania to budding industrial entrepreneur Ariovistus (“Ario”) Pardee, Jr., and Elizabeth (Jacobs) Pardee. The success of Ario’s firm A. Pardee & Co. in the anthracite coal business soon made him a leading citizen of Hazleton. Calvin had an older brother, Ariovistus Pardee III, and two younger sisters, Alice and Ellen Eliza Pardee. Their mother Elizabeth died in childbirth in 1847, and a year later Ario married Anna Maria Robinson, with whom he had ten children, eight of whom survived past childhood.

In 1851 Ario sent his two eldest sons to school at the Luzerne Presbyterian Institute in Wyoming, PA. A dispute with the headmaster in the fall of 1854, however, prompted Ario to withdraw Calvin from the school and send him to the West Jersey Collegiate Institute in Mt. Holly, NJ where his older brother Ario was by then studying. Calvin was admitted to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY in 1857, two years after his brother Ario had enrolled. The boys boarded together for a year until Ario graduated in 1858. Calvin was a member of the Theta Delta Chi fraternity during his three years at Rensselaer. He graduated in 1860 in a class of eighteen students.

After graduating Calvin went to Easton, PA to work for the Glendon Iron Company, of which his father was the primary owner. In April 1861 at age nineteen, however, he enlisted in the army at the start of the Civil War, serving first with Company D, 1st Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, and then as a second lieutenant with Company N, 28th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, a company funded by his father. This unit saw several minor engagements and held defensive posts and in September 1862 was present at the battle of Antietam. Calvin, then a captain, had a renewed attack of typhoid fever the day before the battle. Despite his desire to return to the army, he was declared unfit for further duty and resigned on October 30, 1862.

Calvin spent the next 22 years working in his father’s business, A. Pardee & Co., in Hazleton as the superintendent of mines, a position held by his brother before the war. He married Mary Byrne Day on June 4, 1867, and they became parents of nine children: Estelle, Alice, Calvin, Alfred, Ario, Ellie (who died in childhood), Olive, Howard, and Helen. In 1884 he left his father’s company in order to pursue his own initiatives, including widespread ventures in coal, gas, and other enterprises in both Hazleton and beyond. He was already operating the Pardee Brothers Company, which he formed to develop the Lattimer mines near Hazleton. It was the largest source of his own fortune and was passed on to his children in 1903.

In 1886 Calvin moved to Philadelphia with his family and three years later purchased a summer farm in Whitemarsh sixteen miles outside of the city. Upon completing their schooling his sons Calvin, Alfred, and Ario joined the family businesses in Philadelphia and Hazleton. With them to share responsibilities, Calvin began diverse enterprises in West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, and Louisiana in land, coal, and other interests.

**PARDEE, CALVIN, 1841-1923
PAPERS, 1856-1861**

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In his later years Calvin began to travel throughout the world, including ventures to Europe, the Far East, Egypt, and Russia. His devotion to his family was fondly remembered by his descendents, and he hosted large numbers of Pardees at his summer home every year. In the spring of 1922 his health began to fail, and he died on March 18, 1923. He was survived by six of his children and his wife Mary, who died ten years later.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Calvin Pardee Papers, 1856-61 (2.5 linear inches, 9 folders) consist primarily of letters from Calvin's family and friends during his time spent at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute from 1857-1860, along with assorted receipts, programs, and memorabilia from his college years. The largest number of letters are from his father, Ario Pardee. Other correspondents include his older brother Ario Pardee III; younger sisters Alice Pardee Earle and Ellen Pardee ("Ellie"), who were at school together; his stepmother Anna M. Pardee; his friend Joe B. Shuff from boarding school; and his fraternity brothers.

The first two folders contain letters from Ario Pardee covering the period of 1856-61. In his letters the elder Pardee offers advice; provides arrangements for travel; updates his son on his health, business concerns, and other news from home; and responds to concerns mentioned in letters that he received from Calvin. While undertones of affection and clear concern for his son remain throughout, many of Ario's letters from Calvin's time at Rensselaer revolve around his displeasure over Calvin's handling of money. Nearly half of the letters originally included money or bank drafts to fulfill Calvin's requests or pay off his debts. Ario consistently relates his disapproval of his son's extravagant habits, as evidenced by his repeated requests for a detailed report on Calvin's expenses and his threats to stop sending money. He states that his main concern is not the loss of money but providing financial support to habits which he knows will ultimately lead to Calvin's ruin. Along with his disapproval, Ario expresses regret for his previous indulgence and reminds his son of his own much less fortunate beginnings. The disappointments expressed in the letters extend to Calvin's academic performance on occasion as well, with Ario writing on February 29, 1860 that "unless you make a radical change now you may rest satisfied that your life will be a failure a miserable failure."

Folders 3 through 9 are comprised of Calvin's letters with other family members and friends, arranged chronologically by year for the period 1856-61, and folder 10 contains miscellaneous materials. A significant number of the letters are from his siblings Ario and Alice, providing news as well as occasional advice. Ario married during the fall of 1860, and his letter from November 3 recounts a visit to Troy as part of their travels after the wedding, and one from Alice a week later mentions his visit to her along the way. Miscellaneous materials include receipts, commencement programs for Rensselaer and Hobart Colleges, a report card, and fraternity memorabilia, including a Theta Delta Chi book of songs. There are itemized bills for clothing and paper supplies from 1859 and 1860, and receipts reflect expenses ranging from a mailbox rental and newspaper service to tuition.

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PARDEE FAMILY CORRESPONDENTS IN THE COLLECTION

Ario Pardee, Jr. (1810-1892), father
Ario Pardee, III (1839-1901), brother
Alice Pardee Earle (1843-1916), sister
Ellen Eliza Pardee (1845-1869), sister
Anna M. Robinson Pardee (1820-1892), stepmother
Israel Platt Pardee (1852-1934), half brother: letter of December 1, 1859
Anne Pardee Allison (1854-1937), half sister: letter of December 1, 1861
George B. Markle, uncle: letter of December 11, 1857

PROVENANCE

Collection was purchased in August 2008.

RESOURCES ON CALVIN PARDEE

Foulke, C. Pardee and William G. Foulke. *Calvin Pardee, 1841-1923: His Family and His Enterprises*. Philadelphia, PA: Pardee Company, 1979. (Lafayette Collection Y P226c)

INVENTORY

Folders

- 1 Letters: Ario Pardee, 1856-61
- 2 Letters: Ario Pardee, undated 1856-61
- 3 Letters: 1856
- 4 Letters: 1857
- 5 Letters: 1858
- 6 Letters: 1859
- 7 Letters: 1860
- 8 Letters: 1861
- 9 Letters: undated
- 10 Miscellaneous