

ArMs A0147  
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Charles Stuart Booth Family Papers  
1828-1863  
Brooklyn Historical Society  
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## Introduction

The Charles Stuart Booth Family Papers contain nineteenth century journals and letters. The journals were written by Charles Stuart Booth (1804-1862), a night watchman who lived and raised his family in Williamsburg and worked in lower Manhattan. He and his wife had four children: Horace, Lillian (Lila), Tom, and Phebe. The letters in the collection are mainly family letters written to son Horace while he served in the Union Army, 1861-1863, though there are a few letters from Horace to his sister Phebe and her husband, Hiram K. Lockwood. Accession files indicate that the papers were donated to the Long Island Historical Society in 1952 and 1964 (now Brooklyn Historical Society) by Harry Squiers, Phebe's grandson.

## Biographical Note

Charles Stuart Booth (1804-1862) was a night watchman in lower Manhattan from 1828 to 1862. Booth was a resident of Williamsburgh (note the older spelling), Brooklyn, which was a separate city until it and Bushwick merged with Brooklyn in 1855. Horace became an engineer in the Union Army's 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment from 1861 to 1863 and was posted in Annapolis and Washington, D.C., during the war. Tom Booth's career is unknown, although he did work in a store in Williamsburgh and as a night watchman in the early 1860s, finding work with the help of his father. Phebe Booth married Hiram K. Lockwood in 1857; her sister Lila married a Mr. Carrington.

## Scope and Content

Folders 1-5 (Journals) contain thirteen small journals of Charles Stuart Booth, covering his employment as a privately employed night watchman in lower Manhattan during the years 1828 to 1862, with gaps in the years. The journals are small and very closely written. Booth's territory covered streets in the financial district: Cedar, Pearl and Wall Streets, and Maiden Lane. The journals have entries of varying length, depending on the night's events. In each entry he details the time of beginning work (usually eight o'clock p.m.), weather conditions, events or occurrences – fires were common - during his shift, and the time he ended his shift. Booth usually closed an entry with "left all safe near to 7 AM." There are accounts of the occasional odd event, suspicious person, and need for police assistance. Though his salary was not stated, Booth seems to have been able to support his wife and four children in a comfortable manner in Williamsburgh. His journals are a unique glimpse into the working life of a diligent man over an interesting span of time that included commercial and waterfront development and expansion in lower Manhattan, the Panic of 1837, two cholera epidemics and frequent yellow fever outbreaks, mass immigration, the Mexican War, the melding of King's County and the City of Brooklyn, and election riots, to name only a few topics.

Folders 6-9 contain letters written to Horace Booth while he was served as an engineer in the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Union Army from 1861 to 1863. Most of the letters are from his sister Lila, though a few are from his brother Tom and one is from his father. Horace enlisted in the army in 1861 without consulting his father, but one poignant letter from father to son attests to the father's later approval and good wishes. Also included are letters concerning the Lockwood side of the family: Phebe Booth married Hiram K. Lockwood.

Lila wrote to her brother mainly of domestic concerns and gave advice freely, exhorting Horace to stay healthy, avoid liquor, and lead "a temperate life." She cautioned him to avoid dangerous scouting parties and that if he sees "any balls coming near...be sure to dodge them." Lila's letters also detail the food boxes that she, her mother, and sister are sending to Horace. Though Lila's letters are mainly concerned with domestic matters and news of friends and neighbors in Williamsburgh, she did

mention the now-infamous draft riots in a letter of August 2, 1863, writing that she was afraid there could be another riot if a new draft were called.

A hint of life in Williamsburgh was described by Lila, writing of preparations for celebrating July 4<sup>th</sup> in 1861, of dressing in patriotic colors and patriarch Charles Booth setting off firecrackers in the basement. She also mentions going to view a fireworks display, but the location is not clear. A sense of a tight-knit community is also imparted in letters from Lila and Tom to their brother. They often mentioned neighbors who asked about Horace, and Tom related an anecdote that happened at his store, on which occasion a loud Confederate supporter was tossed out into the street by Tom and some other young men one day in June, 1861. But while his brother was away fighting, Tom found it “very dull in Williamsburgh now.” A letter from a male friend boasted; “the sooner the Rebels are made to know our strength and determination never more to succumb to their dictations, so much the earlier will we conquer and have peace restored.” (F.6)

Folder 9 contains a small envelope of 48 visiting cards that that were utilized to decipher some names in the letters. The final items in this folder are the marriage book of the donor’s grandparents, Phebe and Hiram Lockwood, a promissory note to a William Booth, an obituary of a Col. William H. Lockwood (likely a relative of Hiram’s), and some brief notes by the donor on the Booth and Lockwood families.

#### Processing Note

The journals have been listed and foldered in chronological order, followed by correspondence and the folder containing notes and ephemera. The letters are in good condition, with a few stains and tears, but paper and ink have faded. The journals are in good condition generally, though the handwriting is cramped. Bindings are a bit worn and given to flaking. A photo album, two envelopes of small photo cards (approximately 100 items), seven envelopes of tintypes and other metal photographs (approximately fourteen items), and one folder of large photographs (six items) had been transferred to the Image Collection at an earlier date. Draft by M. Schwartz, February, 2006; re-foldered and edited by Dr. Pettit, May, 2006.

#### Container List

<b><u>Box</u></b>	<b><u>Folder Title</u></b>	<b><u>Dates</u></b>
1	1 Journals	1828-29, 1839-40, 1841
	2 Journals	1843, 1844-46, 1849-50
	3 Journals	1850-51, 1852
	4 Journals	1855, 1856, 1858-60
	5 Journal	1860-62
	6 Booth family correspondence	1861-1863
	7 Booth – Lockwood family correspondence	1849-1861
	8 Booth Lockwood family notes and ephemera	nd