

PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY
Special Collections
Collection #107-03
William J. Bradford Family Photograph Album
c.1860-c.1875

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Number: 107-03

Title: William J. Bradford family photograph album

Creator: Bradford, William James, 1840-1899

Dates: c.1860-c.1875

Quantity: 1 container, total .5 linear feet

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition: Purchased, 2020

Accruals: No accruals are expected.

Custodial history: Unknown.

Processed by: The collection was processed by Jessica Rogers-Cerrato in 2022.

Conservation: Items have been removed from the album and placed in acid-free sleeves. Album has also been preserved.

Language: Materials are in English.

RIGHTS AND ACCESS

Access: This collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Providence Public Library, Special Collections department.

Preferred Citation: Researchers are requested to use the following citation format:
[item number], [item title], William J. Bradford family photograph album,
Special Collections, Providence Public Library, Providence, RI.

Property Rights: Providence Public Library owns the property rights to this collection. Consideration of the copyrights is the responsibility of the researcher.

INFORMATION FOR RESEARCHERS

Separated material None.

Published description Not applicable.

Location of originals Not applicable.

Location of copies Not applicable.

Publication note Not applicable.

Subject headings Bradford, William James, 1840-1899
Wheaton, Mary Elizabeth Bradford, 1843-1926
Wheaton, William Levi, 1838-1878

LCSH:

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Military personnel--Union.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Photographs.

United States. Army. Infantry--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Rhode Island--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

United States. Army. Rhode Island Infantry Regiment, 2nd (1861-1865).

United States. Army. Rhode Island Infantry Regiment, 2nd
(1861-1865). Company E.

United States. Army. Rhode Island Infantry Regiment, 2nd
(1861-1865). Company F.

United States. Army. Rhode Island Infantry Regiment, 2nd
(1861-1865). Company G.

United States. Army. Rhode Island Infantry Regiment, 2nd
(1861-1865). Company K.

Slavery--Rhode Island--History--19th century.

African Americans--Attitudes--History--19th century.

African Americans--History--19th century.

Bristol (R.I. : Town)

Slaves

Women slaves

Older slaves

Grand Army of the Republic. Department of Rhode Island

Grand Army of the Republic. Babbitt Post No. 15 (Bristol, R.I.)

Grand Army of the Republic. Prescott Post No. 1 (Providence, R.I.)

Photography of families

Freemasons

Royal Arcanum

AAT:

enslaved people
domestics (servants)
tintypes (photographs)
cartes-de-visite (card photographs)
black-and-white photographs
photograph albums
photographs

SEE ALSO

- C. Fiske Harris Collection on the Civil War and Slavery Manuscripts, Collection #007-02-01, Special Collections, Providence Public Library.
- C. Fiske Harris Collection on the Civil War and Slavery, Ephemera Collection, Collection #007-04-01, Special Collections, Providence Public Library.
- Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society Collection, Collection #022-02, Special Collections, Providence Public Library.

HISTORICAL NOTE

William James Bradford was born in Bristol, RI, on December 19, 1840 to Peter James Bradford and Lucretia Smith Bradford née Coit (also known as Elizabeth). Three years later his sister, Mary Elizabeth Bradford, was born. In 1873, William married Mary Elizabeth Goodrich and together they had one son, also named William. The Bradfords were a very prominent family in Rhode Island, especially in Bristol. The family lineage can be traced to Governor William Bradford (1590-1657), who served as the head of the Plymouth Colony for 30 years. Dr. William Bradford (1729-1808) settled in Bristol in 1761 and purchased a home that became known as Mount Hope Farm in 1783. Dr. Bradford was a member of the Colonial Assembly, Deputy Governor of Rhode Island, and after the formation of the United States government, he was elected to the US Senate in 1793. Capt. William Bradford (1781-1851), one of many Bradford mariners, was a wealthy sea captain and merchant in the early 1800s who also resided in Bristol, R.I.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, William J. Bradford enlisted in the Union Army on June 6, 1861. He served in the Rhode Island 2nd Infantry, G Company which was recruited out of Bristol. During his service, he was promoted from Corporal to Adjutant. In 1863, he resigned as Adjutant and was assigned to Company E. In November of 1863, he was appointed aide-de-camp (ADC) to distinguished General Frank Wheaton (1833-1903), older brother of William Levi Wheaton. Bradford served in this role until May of 1864, after which he spent his final month of service as Acting Adjutant of his regiment. He was mustered out on June 17, 1864.

After the war, Bradford returned to Providence, RI. For many years he was employed in the office of the collector of internal revenue for the district. He left this position after the consolidation of the districts of Rhode Island and Connecticut. In October of 1888, he returned to the East Bay of RI to reside and took over the store kept by his father, Peter, at 170 Hope Street in Bristol. William

continued in the grocery and hardware business until his death on August 7th, 1899, one week removed from a difficult surgery to extract a cancerous growth. William J. Bradford served as the Bristol town moderator and auditor, and was well-known in the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), Department of Rhode Island, as well as the Freemasons and the Royal Arcanum fraternal benefit society.

William Levi Wheaton was born in Connecticut in 1838 to Dr. Francis Levison Wheaton and Amelia S. Wheaton née Burrill. The family's time in Connecticut was brief and they returned to Providence while William was still quite young. William's grandfather on his mother's side was Col. George Rawson Burrill (1770–1818) and his great-uncle was Senator James Burrill (1772–1820). His father Dr. Wheaton graduated from Brown University in 1838 and served as a surgeon in the Mexican-American War and the American Civil War. Dr. Wheaton went on to become surgeon general of Rhode Island. William was also the younger brother by five years of General Frank Wheaton (1833-1903), under whom William J. Bradford served as ADC during the Civil War. On December 1, 1863, William L. Wheaton married Mary Elizabeth Bradford, sister of William J. Bradford. Together they had two children, one of whom died in infancy.

William Wheaton also enlisted and was mustered into Company G of the Rhode Island 2nd Infantry on June 6, 1861. Originally Wheaton served as a Private for Company G, before being detailed for medical duty as a hospital attendant. Later that same year he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant. He was then assigned to Company F. The following year, in 1862, Wheaton was appointed to 1st Lieutenant and transferred again, this time to Company K. From June of 1862 until May of 1864, Wheaton was on detached service on the staff of General Palmer. He was mustered out on the same day as his brother-in-law, June 17, 1864.

This collection also contains images of three Black individuals: an elderly woman named Aunt Hannah, a young woman named Betty, and an unknown young man. Currently there exists no biographical information for these individuals. Aunt Hannah and Betty are pictured separately each holding a white baby named May, and so may have been nursemaids, or wet nurses, during their servitude. The Bradford family includes generations of slavers who amassed extensive wealth from the triangular trade, as well as from Caribbean plantations, some of whom are also known to have kept enslaved peoples in Bristol, RI. A man listed as Peg Bradford spent his life in bondage and died in 1794 while still a servant of Dr. William Bradford (1729-1808), Deputy Governor of RI and US Senator¹. Dr. Bradford's son, Ezekiel Hersey Bradford (1772-1849), is known to have had a young man of mixed race, named John, bound to him as an apprentice in 1807². A Black boy called Moses Mingo was bound for at least seventeen years, beginning in 1800, to Hon. Daniel Bradford Jr. (1778-1821), formerly Chief Justice for the Court of Common Pleas for the County, a member of the General Assembly, and a member of the Bristol Town Council³. While

¹ "Bradford, Peg servant of Gov. William" died May 27, 1794. Elder Wight's Death Records, Arnold's Vital Records, Vol. 8, p. 361.

² A mulatto boy named John [surname left blank], grandson to Naomi Ichabod, was bound as an apprentice to Hersey Bradford." Nov. 2, 1807, Bristol Town Council & Probate Book 2, 1760-1811, p. 684-85.

³ "The council ordered that the black boy at Capt. Bradford's called Moses Mingo be bound to Daniel Bradford, Jr., for seventeen years from the [number left blank] day of February last." March 3, 1800, Bristol Town Council & Probate Book 2, 1760-1811, p. 504-5.

research shows Dr. Francis L. Wheaton's family kept domestic servants of both Black and Irish descent in Providence, RI, during the period documented in this collection, the full nature of these relationships has not been determined and the names listed in census records do not match those of the individuals pictured here.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

The William J. Bradford Family Photograph Album collection contains a total of 15 items: 14 photographs, and one photograph album. Of the 14 photographs, 12 are early examples of carte de visites (CdV), approximately the size of visiting cards (4 x 2.5 inches), which became very popular in the United States during the Civil War, as the families of soldiers now had a means of obtaining keepsakes of their loved ones. The additional two photographs, items 13 and 14, are similarly sized tintypes, one mounted on cardstock and one unmounted. The album itself is blue in color with ornate gold borders on its cover, approximately 5.5 x 4.25 inches in size, with a small locking mechanism that no longer functions. The book-like album contains 15 thick pages with pre-cut openings specifically for these style and size photographs.

The photographs in this collection are predominantly images of William James Bradford (1840-1899), though also pictured are William Levi Wheaton (1838-1878) and his wife Mary Elizabeth Bradford Wheaton (1843-1926), who was also William J. Bradford's sister. Five of the photos depict William J. Bradford in his Union Army uniform, while one additional photo shows him in a suit. William and Mary Wheaton can be seen in two photos, one where they are accompanied by a Mr. Ordway and a Mr. Leary and another featuring a Christmas message. There is also a photo of an unidentified house with two white men standing on its porch and one young Black man leaning against a tree in the yard. Of particular note within this collection are two separate photos of unknown Black women holding what appears to be the same white child. The first includes the caption "Aunt Hannah & Baby May," while the second is labeled "Betty & Baby May." The final three photos depict unidentified white women: one woman standing, an older woman with a baby, and finally the first woman again with the same baby in her arms. This person could be William J. Bradford's wife Mary, though this has not been confirmed. All of the photographs mentioned above are carte de visites, except the last two which are the tintypes. While this album has been attributed to William J. Bradford, it is possible that it was created by his sister, Mary Elizabeth Bradford Wheaton (1843-1926).

ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION

In order to better preserve the materials in this collection, individual items were removed from the photograph album. The carte-de-visites and tintypes have been arranged in the same order as they appeared in the original album as determined by the album's creator. The album itself has also been preserved and is housed in the same archival box as the photographs. Thus, this collection has been organized into two series: series one contains photographs, while series two contains the photograph album. Identifying information, such as the name of the photographer or studio as well as any captions, have been included within the descriptions below.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION**Series 1: Photographs**

Item	Title	Date	Box	Folder
1	William J. Bradford in uniform with painted drop cloth background of an infantry camp. Photographer: J. Trott, Bristol, RI Inscription on verso: "W.J. Bradford, Adgt 2nd R.I. Vols."	c.1861	1	1
2	William J. Bradford in uniform, standing. Photographer: A.E. Alden, Arcade, Providence, RI Inscription on verso: "Will Bradford"	c.1863	1	2
3	Mr. & Mrs. W.L. Wheaton, Mr. Ordway & Mr. Leary Photographer: C.D. Fredricks & Co., New York, NY Inscription on verso: "Two groomsmen with Will & Mary"	c.1862	1	3
4	William & Mary Wheaton, Dec. 25, 1863 Photographer: C.D. Fredricks & Co., New York, NY Inscription on verso: "Merry Christmas Will Wheaton & Mary"	1863	1	4
5	William J. Bradford in uniform, standing with chair Photographer: Unknown Inscription: None	c.1860	1	5
6	William J. Bradford in uniform, headshot Photographer: J. Trott, Bristol, RI Inscription: None	c.1861	1	6
7	William J. Bradford in uniform, headshot with beard Photographer: J. Byerly, Frederick, MD Inscription: None	c.1863	1	7
8	William J. Bradford, bust Photographer: A.E. Alden, Arcade, Providence, RI Inscription on verso: None	c.1870	1	8
9	Unidentified house with three men, two white & one Black Photographer: Unknown Inscription: None	c.1860	1	9
10	Elderly Black woman holding white child Photographer: N. Ghirardini, Providence, RI Inscription on verso: "Aunt Hannah and baby May"	1866	1	10
11	Young Black woman holding white child Photographer: N. Ghirardini, Providence, RI Inscription on verso: "Betty & baby May"	1866	1	11
12	Unidentified white woman with chair Photographer: O.J. Smith, Union Photographic Rooms,	c.1870	1	12

	Newbern, NC; J.D. Heywood's Photograph Rooms, New Berne, NC Inscription: None			
13	White woman with baby, mounted tintype Photographer: A.E. Alden, Arcade, Providence, RI Inscription on recto: "Grandmama from Baby"	c.1875	1	13
14	White woman with baby, unmounted tintype Photographer: Unknown Inscription: None	c.1875	1	14

Series 2: Photograph Album

Item	Title	Date	Box	Folder
1	Ornate blue & gold photograph album Dimensions: 5.5 x 4.25 inches	c.1860-c.1875	1	NA