



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Emily Fowler Ford papers

1744-1893 [bulk 1834-1893]

MssCol 1038

Compiled by Sara Pasquerello and Julia Todd, 2006

Summary

Creator: Ford, Emily Ellsworth (Fowler), 1826-1893

Title: Emily Fowler Ford papers

Date: 1744-1893 [bulk 1834-1893]

Size: 6.34 linear feet (16 boxes)

Source: Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1899.

Abstract: Emily Ellsworth (Fowler) Ford was an educated nineteenth-century woman who wrote prolifically from adolescence until her death in 1893. Her work was published in a variety of contemporary literary journals, magazines, and newspapers. She was the granddaughter of Noah Webster and wife of Gordon Lester Ford, a prominent businessman and lawyer, with whom she raised their seven children. Ford was involved in many charitable organizations around her home in Brooklyn and was well-known within social and literary circles. The collection consists of family and general correspondence, Ford's published and unpublished writing, notes and keepsakes, and a small number of photographs. The material spans parts of her childhood in Amherst through her death in 1893.

Access: Advance notice required.

Conditions Governing Access:

Photocopies of original Emily Dickinson letters must be used in lieu of originals. The letters have been published in *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, 3 volumes, 1958.

Preferred citation: Emily Fowler Ford Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Sara Pasquerello and Julia Todd, 2006

Related Materials:

Emily Ellsworth Ford Skeel papers. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
Ford family papers. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Gordon Lester Ford papers. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
Paul Leicester Ford papers. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
Worthington C. Ford papers. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Creator History

Emily Ellsworth (Fowler) Ford (1826-1893), a granddaughter of Noah Webster (1748-1843) the lexicographer, and daughter of William Chauncey Fowler (1793-1881) a professor of rhetoric and oratory and English literature at Amherst College (1838-1843), grew up in Amherst, Massachusetts and moved to Brooklyn, New York in late 1853 upon her marriage to Gordon Lester Ford (1823-1891), a businessman and lawyer. Ford came from a prominent family, well-connected within both social and literary circles. Her family was friends with the Dickinson family, also of Amherst, and Ford and Emily Dickinson were childhood friends. Together they discussed literature and formed an adolescent group that wrote recreationally. Ford's literary aspirations continued into adulthood where she became a prolific writer of poetry and narrative, and achieved publication in various newspapers and magazines, along with *My Recreations* (1872), a collection of her poetry. Her publications are represented throughout some of the better-known nineteenth-century magazines and journals, such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Scribner's*, *Harper's*, and the *New York Tribune*. Ford was also active within several charity organizations including the Brooklyn Orphan Asylum and helped to organize fundraisers. She had four surviving daughters Kathleen Gordon (Ford) Turle (b.1856), Mabel Percy (Ford) Mayo-Smith (b.1863), Rosalie Greenleaf (Ford) Barr (b.1859), Emily Ellsworth (Ford) Skeel (b.1869), and three sons, Worthington Chauncey Ford (b.1858), a prominent historian and writer, Malcolm Webster Ford (b.1862), a well-known amateur athlete, and Paul Leicester Ford (b.1865), an historian and popular novelist. The children were educated and raised with the Ford family library, renowned for its vast holdings and collections.

Custodial History

In 1899, Worthington Chauncey Ford and Paul Leicester Ford offered the New York Public Library their collection of printed books as a memorial to their father, Gordon Lester Ford. The gift, estimated at more than 30,000 books, 70,000 pamphlets, and a large number of maps and prints, came partly as a result of the purchase by J. Pierpont Morgan of the Ford collection of manuscripts, from which he made his selection, turning the remainder over to the library. The papers of Emily Fowler Ford and other family members were part of donation of manuscripts.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of family and general correspondence, Ford's published and unpublished writing, commonplace books, notes and keepsakes, and a small number of photographs. The material spans parts of her childhood in Amherst through her death in 1893.

Key Terms

Subjects

Authors and publishers

Poets, American -- 19th century
Women poets, American

Occupations

Authors, American

Geographic Names

Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) -- Social life and customs -- 19th century
Massachusetts -- Social life and customs -- 19th century

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Diaries
Photographs
Poems
Scrapbooks

Names

Dickinson, Emily, 1830-1886
Ford, Emily Ellsworth (Fowler), 1826-1893
Ford, Gordon Lester, 1823-1891
Ford, Kathleen, 1950-
Ford, Mabel
Ford, Malcolm Webster, 1862-1902
Ford, Paul Leicester, 1865-1902
Ford, Rosalie
Ford, Worthington Chauncey, 1858-1941
Fowler, William Chauncey, 1793-1881
Skeel, Emily Ellsworth Ford, 1867-1958
Webster, Noah, 1758-1843
Ford family
Fowler family

Container List

Series I. General correspondence 1837-1893 (3 boxes)

Emily Ford's general correspondence consists of her drafts of letters sent and received responses from friends. Correspondents include M.J. Browne, Marie Benchely, Fanny Foster Clark, Katharine Gilman and other members of the Gilman family, Marie Taylor, Esther B. Carpenter, and Gertrude May. The papers include social requests and personal correspondence about trips taken, literature read, and acquaintances visited. There are eight letters from Emily Dickinson (ca.1853). Several letters from Olivia Coleman are included in the undated section of the collection. These letters appear to predate Ford's marriage and evidence an intimate relationship between the women. The papers also include professional correspondence with publishers and editors about her work, including a letter to George Eliot.

- b. 1 f. 1 1837-1844
- b. 1 f. 2-10 1845-1861
- b. 1 f. 11-14 1863-1867
- b. 1 f. 15-32 1869-1886
- b. 2 f. 1-13 1887-1893
- b. 2 f. 14 Literary rejections 1888-1891
- b. 2 f. 15 Emily Dickinson letters undated (photocopies)
- b. 16 Emily Dickinson letters undated
Restricted. Consult photocopies in box 2.
- b. 3 f. 1-16 Undated
- b. 3 f. 17 Envelopes

Series II. Family correspondence 1834-1893 (3 boxes)

Ford's family correspondence consists of both drafts of letters sent and received responses. They include numerous letters from Ford's father, William Chauncey Fowler, some from her brother William, and a few from her brother Charles; there are also several letters from her mother, Mary C. Fowler and letters that Ford wrote to her grandparents as a child. Letters from Gordon Ford are throughout the collection along with letters from all of the Ford children, and several of the grandchildren. The earlier letters from the Ford children include ones written while separated on trips detailing daily activities and instructions on behavior. An 1883 letter from her daughter Mabel Percy (Ford) Mayo-Smith describes her excitement at becoming engaged. Other family correspondence includes letters from relatives such as E.E. Goodrich, Chauncey Goodrich, Eliza Ann Fowler, William Webster, Catharine Hand, and letters from Ford's nieces and nephews. The topics of the correspondence mainly include visits and news of family members, along with many condolence letters upon Gordon Ford's death.

- b. 4 f. 1 1834, 1836, 1839
- b. 4 f. 2 1840, 1842-1845
- b. 4 f. 3-11 1846-1885
- b. 5 f. 1-8 1886-1893
- b. 5 f. 9 Undated- pre-1854
- b. 5 f. 10-12 Undated
- b. 6 f. 1-17 Undated

Series III. Writings (6 boxes)

The Writings series contains both handwritten and printed versions of Ford's work from adolescence until her death in 1893.

Series III. Writings (cont.)

A. Manuscript drafts

The writings that constitute the Manuscript Drafts subseries are handwritten drafts of both poetry and narratives by Ford. There are essays written in childhood, along with later, more professional work. There is no individual work that constitutes the majority of the subseries. Many of her writings consist of several drafts prior to publication with corrections and suggestions in the margins.

- b. 7 f. 1-20 Poetry
- b. 8 f. 1-19 Poetry
- b. 9 f. 1-19 Poetry and Prose
- b. 10 f. 1-13 Poetry and Prose
- b. 10 f. 14-15 Prose
- b. 11 f. 1-12 Prose
- b. 11 f. 13 Notes about her writing
- b. 11 f. 14-17 **B. Published writing**

This subseries consists of several of Ford's printed manuscripts with handwritten corrections written in the margins.

- b. 12 f. 1-3 **C. Scrapbooks**

Three scrapbooks of her writings are present. Two of the three scrapbooks contain clipped poems on newsprint, collected and pasted within the books. The third book is inscribed "Poems by Emily E. Ford compiled by Worthington C. Ford," and contains handwritten poems copied upon the pages.

Series IV. Personal miscellany (3 boxes)

This series contains numerous different types of documents. It includes records of receipts and accounts, event pamphlets, Ford's school report card, sketches, calling cards and social invitations, legal papers, recipes, and an autograph or remembrance book given to her by Noah Webster. Non-paper materials include locks of hair, pressed leaves, and small gifts from her children. There are also several genealogical papers, including two eighteenth-century documents (1744 and 1764).

- b. 12 f. 4 Autograph/ remembrance book
- b. 12 f. 5 Commonplace book
- b. 13 f. 1 French Poetry commonplace book
- b. 13 f. 2 Genealogical papers
- b. 13 f. 3 Invitations and callings cards
- b. 13 f. 4 Keepsakes
- b. 13 f. 5 Legal papers
- b. 13 f. 6 Meetings and events
- b. 13 f. 7 Notes
- b. 13 f. 8 Personal papers
- b. 13 f. 9-14 Printed matter
- b. 14 f. 1-5 Printed matter
- b. 14 f. 6 Receipts and accounts
- b. 14 f. 7 Sketches

Series V. Photographs (1 box)

Photographs in the collection include images of Emily Ellsworth (Fowler) Ford, Gordon Lester Ford, Malcolm Ford, Rufus J. Barr, John and Emily McCoy, and unidentified individuals. There are, additionally, several photographs of Hildesheim, Germany and the Ford family library.

Series V. Photographs (cont.)

- b. 14 f. 8 Photostat
- b. 15 Photographs