

Arthur Bronson papers, 1829-1871 (bulk 1833-1844).

Descriptive Inventory for the Collection at Chicago History Museum, Research Center
By Robert D. Kozlow, 1962; rev. by Heather Leslie, 2011

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Title: Arthur Bronson papers [manuscript], 1829-1871 (bulk 1833-1844).

Main Entry: Bronson, Arthur, 1801-1844

Inclusive Dates: 1829-1871 (bulk 1833-1844).

Size:

3 linear ft. (5 boxes); approximately 3,000 items

1 microfilm reel; neg.; 35 mm (Camera neg. of Frederic Bronson land book)

Access: Collection is open for research use.

Provenance statement: Most of the collection has been at Chicago Historical Society for a long time. Some items were acquired in a purchase from Dicke in 1949.

Terms governing use: Copyright may be retained by the creators of items, or their descendants, as stipulated by United States copyright law, unless otherwise noted.

Please cite this collection as: Arthur Bronson papers (Chicago History Museum) plus a detailed description, date, and box/folder number of a specific item.

The descriptive inventory contains the following sections:

Biographical note,

Summary description of the collection,

Detailed description of some topics in the collection,

List of online catalog headings about the collection,

Arrangement of the collection,

List of contents of the collection.

Biographical/historical note:

Arthur Bronson (1801-1844) was a New York City financier who speculated in lands in Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan. He came to Chicago for the first time in the winter of 1832-1833 from New York and soon was in contact with other leading businessmen and local land-owners. He was among the first speculators in Chicago real property. Bronson also donated over two hundred volumes to one of Chicago's first Sunday schools.

Summary description of the collection:

Correspondence, land conveyances, accounts, receipts, abstracts of title, deeds, mortgages, leases, foreclosure papers, indentures, and other legal documents, mostly relating to Bronson's real estate business and transactions in Chicago, elsewhere in Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan. Correspondents include agents, land speculators, and many businessmen especially in Chicago and in Milwaukee. Topics include land speculation, sales of lands after effects of the Panic of 1837 reached Chicago, canal lands, surveys, preemption claims, and day to day operation of Bronson's business. Bronson's association with Chicago politician Hiram Pearson, ca. 1835-1844, is represented by over 100 items. The collection also includes information about land holdings of Beaubien family members and of Billy Caldwell, some early Native American residents of the Chicago area; a few items relate to the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad Company; and papers, ca. 1839-1844, detail the financing, construction, and furnishing of the elegant Chicago hotel known as the Lake House.

The collection is arranged in two parts: part one is miscellaneous papers in chronological order, and part two is composed of papers involving well-known businessmen, divided into folders by name and the folders filed alphabetically.

Detailed description of some topics in the collection:

Collection includes a 20,000 dollar bond for Canal Block no. 1, June 13, 1838, signed by many leading businessmen; also a statement of leased lots in Block 1 and an account of rents from Jan. 1 to Nov. 1, 1840; and abstracts of title for lots in Block 1. Abstracts of title for lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 in Block 1; mentions Eleanor Wolcott, David Hunter, Maria Hunter, Arthur Bronson, Charles Butler, Frederick Bronson, William B. Ogden and Royal Stewart. There are documents regarding lots in the Kinzie Addition (claimed obtained by fraud); and documents and letters regarding early Wisconsin: tax receipts and miscellaneous items pertaining to different counties.

The collection also includes information about some of the early Native American residents. There are memos of the lands assigned to or claimed by the Beaubiens, showing the deficiencies, December 12, 1835. There is a list of conveyances made by Billy Caldwell of portions of the area known as the Caldwell Reservation, lying on the North Branch of the Chicago River, Cook County, Illinois. There is an abstract of the conveyances made by Billy Caldwell of certain tracts reserved to him by the Treaty of Prairie du Chien in 1829; and a letter from Richard Hamilton to John Kinzie relative to Mr. Bronson managing all matters pertaining to interests in the Caldwell Reservation; a copy of the original patent from the United States to Billy Caldwell, June 1839; and a copy of the Partition Deed signed by Caldwell, Richard Hamilton and others, with an attached map of the sections reserved.

In 1835 John Temple wrote to Bronson that he is astonished at the growth of the city and at the demand for property in Chicago. On Feb. 27, 1834, Temple wrote to Bronson that politicians in Springfield expressed interest in passing legislation to subsidize canal or railroad construction in Illinois with lands and tolls. There are several letters in the Temple folder regarding the Kinzie and Beaubien lots and a copy of a charter for a Chicago cemetery.

A few items relate to the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad Company.

Papers, ca. 1839-1844, detail the financing, construction, and furnishing of the elegant hotel known as the Lake House for 100,000 dollars at the corner of Kinzie Street, Rush Street, and Michigan Street in Chicago in 1835. Gurdon Hubbard, John H. Kinzie, General David S. Hunter Dr. W.B.

Egan, and Major James B. Campbell were responsible for building the Lake House. It was sold under a foreclosure of mortgage some years later

Several letters by Charles Butler concern property in Indiana near LaPorte; other items concern litigation about later ownership of Archibald Clybourn's 12-acre farm (Harry S. Doolittle vs. A. Clybourn, Bronson Executive).

Men with whom Bronson was associated in business included:

Abbott, Lucius
Arnold, Isaac
Beaubien Family.
Burch, Isaac H.
Bushnell, Orsamus
Butler, Charles
Caldwell, Billy
Clark, John A.
Clybourn, Archibald
Denniston, Garret V.
Dickey, Hugh T.
Egan, William B.
Ellis, Albert G.
Forbes, Stephen
Fullerton, Alexander
Goodrich, Grant
Grant, James
Gholson, Kercheval
Hamilton, Richard J.
Hubbard, Gurdon S.
Joy, J. F.
Judson, Leander
Hale, Mervin
Kinzie, Robert
Kinzie, John
Kinzie, James
Lathrop, E. M.
Moore, Henry
Newberry, Walter
Murray, James B.
Ogden, William B.
Ogden and Jones
Pearson, Hiram
Peas, James H.
Russell, Samuel
Taylor, Edward
Temple, John
Temple, Peter
Tillson, John, Jr.
Whiting, W. L. (first treasurer of the Chicago Board of Trade)
Wright, John S.

Wright and Goodrich

List of online catalog headings about the collection:

The following headings were placed in the online catalog.

Subjects:

Bronson, Arthur--Archives.

Butler, Charles, 1802-1897.

Caldwell, Billy, 1780-1841.

Egan, William B. (William Bradshaw), 1808-1860.

Fullerton, Alexander N.

Hubbard, Gurdon Saltonstall, 1802-1886.

Kinzie, John Harris, 1803-1865.

Newberry, Walter Loomis, 1804-1868.

Ogden, William B. (William Butler), 1805-1877.

Owen, Thomas Jefferson Vance, 1801-1835.

Pearson, Hiram, 1811- ?

Sedgwick, Robert.

Temple, John C.

Galena and Chicago Union Railroad Company.

Lake House (Hotel : Chicago, Ill.)

Capitalists and financiers--New York (State)--19th century.

Fur trade--Illinois.

Real estate business--Illinois--Chicago--19th century.

Real estate investment--Illinois--Chicago--19th century.

Real estate investment--Illinois--19th century.

Real estate investment--Wisconsin--Milwaukee--19th century.

Real estate investment--Wisconsin--19th century.

Real estate investment--Indiana--19th century.

Real estate investment--Michigan--19th century.

Land subdivision--Illinois--Chicago--19th century.

Land titles--Registration and transfer--Illinois--Cook County--19th century.

Indian land transfers--Illinois--19th century.

Milwaukee (Wis.)--Commerce--19th century.

Prairie Du Chien (Wis.)--Treaties.

Chicago (Ill.)--Commerce--19th century.

Form/genre:

Abstracts of title.

Contracts.

Deeds.

Indentures.

Leases.

Legal documents.

Maps.

Microfilm.

Receipts (financial records)

Surveys.

Tax records.

Co-creator:

Bronson, Frederic, 1802-1868.

Butler, Charles, 1802-1897.

Caldwell, Billy, 1780-1841.

Pearson, Hiram, 1811- ?

Temple, John C.

Kinzie, John Harris, 1803-1865.

Wright, John S. (John Stephen), 1815-1874.

Arrangement of the collection:

The papers are arranged in two groups. The first group consists of miscellaneous papers placed in chronological order, and the second group concerns Bronson's dealing with various well-known real estate dealers. Those are arranged alphabetically.

List of contents of the collection:

Series 1. Miscellaneous papers in chronological order:

box 1

folders:

- 1 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 2 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 3 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 4 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 5 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 6 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 7 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 8 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 9 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 10 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 11 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 12 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869
- 13 Correspondence, etc., 1833-1869

Series 2. Bronson's dealings with businessmen, land speculators, etc., arranged alphabetically by name:

box 2

folders:

- 14 Abbot, Lucius (Michigan), items 1834-1847
- 15 Beaubien, Medart (Michigan), items 1833-1839
- 16 Betteys, Alonzo (Indiana), items 1835
- 17 Bower, John (Wisconsin), items 1846-1848
- 18 Brand, Alexander (Chicago), items 1844
- 19 Bushnell, Orasmus (Chicago), items 1838-1840
- 20 Butler, Charles (Chicago), items 1833-1840
- 21 Catlin, John (Wisconsin), items 1842-1844
- 22 Clark, John A. (Wisconsin), items 1836-1839
- 23 Clybourn, Archibald (Chicago), items 1835-1844
- 24 Daniels, Lyman J. (Michigan), items 1835-1838
- 25 Denniston, Garret V. (Wisconsin), items 1836-1862
- 26 Denniston, Garret V. (Wisconsin), items 1836-1862

- 27 Dickey, Hugh (Chicago), items 1837-1857
- 28 Egan, William B. (Chicago), items 1835-1840
- 29 Ellis, Albert G. (Wisconsin), items 1835-1845
- 30 Ellis, Albert G. (Wisconsin), items 1835-1845
- 31 Fleming, John (Illinois), items 1833
- 32 Forbes, Stephen (Chicago), items 1837-1841
- 33 Fullerton, Alexander N. (Chicago), items 1836-1844
- 34 Grant, James (Chicago), items 1835-1840
- 35 Hamilton, Richard J. (Chicago), items 1833-1846
- 36 Hubbard, Gurdon S. (Chicago), items 1841-1842

box 3

folders:

- 37 Hubbard, Thomas H. (Chicago), items 1847
- 38 Joy, James F. (Michigan), items 1855-1864
- 39 Judson, Leander (Wisconsin), items 1836-1838
- 40 Kinzie, James (Chicago), items 1833-1835
- 41 Kinzie, John H (Chicago), items 1833-1842
- 42 Kinzie, John H (Chicago), items 1833-1842
- 43 Kinzie, John H (Chicago), items 1833-1842
- 44 Kinzie, Robert A. (Chicago), items 1833-1842
- 45 Mattocks, John (Chicago), items 1867-1871
- 46 Murray, James B. (Illinois), items 1837-1859
- 47 Newberry, Walter L. (Chicago), items 1839-1862
- 48 Ogden, William B. (Chicago), items 1842-1844
- 49 Ogden and Fleetwood (Chicago), items 1858-1867
- 50 Ogden and Jones (Chicago), items 1844-1852
- 51 Ogden and Jones (Chicago), items 1844-1852
- 52 Ogden and Jones (Chicago), items 1844-1852
- 53 Ogden and Jones (Chicago), items 1844-1852
- 54 Owen, Thomas J. V. (Chicago), items 1833
- 55 Pearson, Hiram (Chicago), items 1835-1844
- 56 Pearson, Hiram (Chicago), items 1835-1844
- 57 Pearson, Hiram (Chicago), items 1835-1844
- 58 Pearson, Hiram (Chicago), items 1835-1844
- 59 Rees, James H. (Chicago), items 1854
- 60 Russell, Samuel (Chicago), items 1840-1843

box 4

folders:

- 61 Sedgwick, Robert (Chicago), items 1835-1836
- 62 Taylor, Lathrop M. (Indiana), items 1833
- 63 Temple, John C. (Chicago), items 1833-1836
- 64 Temple, Peter (Chicago), items 1833-1838
- 65 Tillson, John (Illinois), items 1841-1845
- 66 Whitney, W. L. (Chicago), items 1841-1842
- 67 Wright, John S. (Chicago), items 1848-1859
- 68 Wright, Truman G. (Chicago), items 1835-1838
- 69 Wyman, William (Wisconsin), items 1829-1836

- 70 Billy Caldwell Reservation (Illinois) items
- 71 Lake House (Chicago), items 1839-1848
- 72 Lake House (Chicago), items 1839-1848
- 73 Lake House (Chicago), items 1839-1848
- 74 Lake House (Chicago), items 1839-1848
- 75 Lake House (Chicago), items 1839-1848

box 5

oversize volumes:

Chicago, Cook County, tax sale list, items 1838-1843

Land title book, 1833-1840 (Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan) - Frederic Bronson

Mainly consists of mortgage records and land purchasing activities of Arthur Bronson, Frederic Bronson, and Isaac Bronson. Includes mortgage records and land purchasing activities of Oliver Bronson as well. Also includes descriptions of the various mortgages and lands purchased. Land coverage ranges from Indiana (including Evansville and Mishawaka), Illinois (including Chicago), Michigan (including Kalamazoo), and Wisconsin Territory (including Milwaukee). Under contract purchasers of land for the Bronsons include John P. Sheldon, Lyman J. Daniels, Thomas C. Legate, William N. Gardnier, Cogswell K. Green (of Niles), Lucius Lyon, Archibald Clybourn, Stephen Forbes, and William B. Ogden. Those paying mortgages to the Bronsons include Alexander and Mary Ely, Lucius Lyon, De LaFayette Wilcox, Hiram Pearson, John H. Kinzie, Robert A. Kinzie, Richard Hamilton, Stephen Forbes, William B. Ogden and many others. Most of the mortgages listed were paid to Arthur Bronson. Real estate business associates of the Bronsons include John Ward and S. Knapp.

Throughout the book are various land lists, such as lands belonging to the heirs of Theodorus Bailey, lands belonging to Frederic Bronson opposite St. Louis bought through the agency of Martin Thomas, lands sold to Alexander L. Ely in Michigan, and lands belonging to Mrs. Mary Hale. Included is a description of the lands owned by Samson Wilder in Evansville, Indiana. Also includes descriptions of lands belonging to Arthur Bronson on Laporte (or Door) Praire and Rolling Praire in Indiana and a stock farm known as "The Two Brothers" owned by Arthur and Frederic Bronson in the Wisconsin Territory. There is also a deed for land in Chicago between Arthur Bronson and Frederic Bronson and a deed between Hugh Dickey to Author Bronson.

Note: A negative microfilm (135 exposures) of the Frederic Bronson Land Book was microfilmed for the Chicago History Museum by the Newberry Library in June 1978.