

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Historical note 2. Scope and content 3. Provenance 4. Processing note 5. Inventory 6. Subjects <p> List of finding aids R.I.H.S. Library page R.I.H.S. home page </p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Alva Woods Family Papers</h2> <p>Family of Providence, R.I. Papers, 1817-1930. Bulk, 1817-1900 Size: 5 ft. Catalog number: MSS 816 Processed by: Nathaniel N. Shipton, 1977 Revised and expanded by Rick Stattler, February 2000</p> <p style="text-align: center;">©Rhode Island Historical Society Manuscripts Division</p>
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Historical note:

Alva Woods (1794-1887) was born in Shoreham, Vt., the son of Baptist minister Abel Woods and Mary (Smith) Woods. He graduated from Harvard University in 1817, and then from the Andover Theological Seminary in 1821. From 1822 to 1824, he served as a professor of history and mathematics at Columbian College in Washington, D.C. (later George Washington University). He then served as a professor at Brown University through 1828, including a stint as interim president. He was president of Transylvania University in Kentucky through 1831, and then the first president at the University of Alabama from 1831 through 1837. He returned to Providence and was active at Brown University as a trustee and member of the board of fellows.

Almira Marshall (1804-1863) was the daughter of Josiah and Priscilla Marshall of Boston. She married Alva Woods in 1823 and joined him in his travels to Kentucky, Alabama and Rhode Island. They had two children: Marshall Woods (1824-1899) and Priscilla M. Woods (1826-1827).

Marshall Woods (1824-1899) graduated from Brown University in 1845, and then received a medical degree from the University of New York in 1848. He never set up a regular medical practice, and devoted most of his time to the management of his real estate and other investments. He was a director of the Providence National Bank. He was also an accomplished scholar of literature and art. He was a commissioner in the 1855 Paris exposition, and served Brown University as its treasurer from 1866 to 1882. He died in London in 1899.

Anne Brown Francis (1828-1896) was the daughter of Gov. John Brown Francis and Anne Brown. Her paternal great-grandfather was famous Providence merchant John Brown, and her maternal grandfather was John Brown's nephew, Nicholas Brown, for whom Brown University was named. She married Marshall Woods in 1848. They had two children: Abby Francis (Woods) Abbott (1849-1895) and John Carter Brown Woods (1851-1930).

John Carter Brown Woods (1851-1930) graduated from Brown University in 1872, and from Harvard Law School in 1874. He served as a trustee of Brown University from 1884 onward, and as president of the State Board of Charities and Corrections from 1894 to 1898. He was active in Republican politics, and was elected as a state Representative from 1881 to 1887, and state Senator in 1891, 1894, 1895 and 1896. He served as president of the Providence Common Council from 1881 through 1884. He was a founder of the Hope Club, and served as its president from 1892 to 1898. He also served on the boards of many other Providence clubs, charities and organizations. He was the author of several books and articles on genealogy and the Brown family. He never married, and died in Providence in 1930.

Bibliography:

Biographical notes on the Woods family in Series 2, folder 5 of this collection
Chad Brown Workbook, 2nd ed. Rhode Island Historical Society, 1987.

- Cutter, William R. *New England Families Genealogical and Memorial*. N.Y.: Lewis, 1915.
- Kingsbury, Frank B. *Marshall Family Record*. Keene, N.H.: Nims Press, 1913.
- Rogers, L.E., ed. *The Biographical Cyclopedia of Representative Men of Rhode Island*. Providence: National Biographical Publishing, 1881.
- Shipton, Nathaniel N. "Alva Woods: Inventory of His Papers in the Rhode Island Historical Society," 1977

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Scope and content:

Series I Correspondence: constitutes the heart of the collection, in terms of both size and significance. All letters and documents are foldered individually. Letters addressed to all five members of the Woods family (Alva, Almira, Marshall, Ann and John) are interfiled in chronological order. There are frequent letters to Alva Woods regarding the University of Alabama, including many letters from his successor Basil Manly (1798-1868), later a leading minister in the Confederacy. Alva and Almira Woods also corresponded frequently with Texas president Samuel Houston and his wife. There are frequent family letters between Alva, Almira Marshall and Anne Woods, as well as from members of the Marshall family. Letters frequently include detailed impressions of life in Europe and the American South in the mid-nineteenth century. Anne B. (Francis) Woods' letters to her mother-in-law Almira Woods also freely discuss marriage, religion and politics.

Series II Miscellaneous: contains several miscellaneous genealogical and personal items. **Series III: Diaries:** includes diaries by all five family members, mostly kept while traveling. **Series IV: Notes on religion:** includes Alva Woods' theological notes, mostly written while studying at Andover Theological Seminary or teaching at the University of Alabama.

Series V: Property documents: consists of family deeds and probate records.

Series VI: Later Accessions: is composed of material donated by the Washburn family in 1982 and 1991, after the collection was initially processed. It has not been fully integrated in with the remainder of the collection, and is arranged by family member rather than by series.

Diary Extracts from Almira Woods and Anne B. (Francis) Woods

Perhaps the most interesting items in the collection are the diaries kept by Almira Woods while traveling in the South between 1830 and 1833. The following extracts and notes may be of interest:

Childhood: Traveling with young son [1830, 1831, 1833]

Community: On arriving in Tuscaloosa: "I am again thrown dependent upon strangers, to again pass the ordeal of opinion, to be measured by a foreign standard & of course to be found wanting." [4/1/1831].

Fashion: "...the ladies in Frederick painted and powdered with ceremony or any remorse of conscience" [5/11/1830?]

Labor: Long discussion of scarcity of railroad mechanics and other issues re Baltimore & Ohio Railroad [5/11/1830?]. Visit to Kentucky Penitentiary, long discussion of prisoners, their conditions, and their "demoniacal countenances" [3/10/1831]; Negro and white prisoners working on public streets in New Orleans [3/23/1831].

Marriage: "The wife of a public man cannot be too careful in speaking to strangers or even to friends" [5/28/1830]; "I have learnt something today, which is to obey my husband." [3/12/1831]

Persons frequently mentioned: Escorted by Mr. Winter of Lexington for much of first trip [1830]; Kentucky Gov. Joseph Desha (1830); long account of discussion with "Col. Crockett...who said he could whip his weight in wild cats." [3/17/1831].

Places written: 1) Lexington, KY; Ohio; Baltimore; Philadelphia; New York City (journal stops here). 2) Lexington down Ohio River; Mississippi River; New Orleans; Mobile to Tuscaloosa. 3) Tuscaloosa to northern Alabama.

Progress: "Found the Pennsylvanians generally in favor of canals rather than railroads" [5/27/1830]; "Took a walk among the machinery of the boat determined to make acquaintance with the engines." [3/11/1831]

Race / ethnicity content: Recounts anecdotes about Indians [5/4/1830]; "kind interference of a blacky" [1830]; anecdote about Indians' aversion to red hair [3/10/1831]; sympathetic encounter with "a lot of negroes stowed away for the southern market" [3/11/1831]; encounter with Chickasaws and slave ship

[3/12/1831?]. Large party of Choctaws [3/18/1831?]. Frequent discussion of negroes in 1833 diary, including list of slaves and cotton picked by each on Mr. Jarman's plantation in Franklin County, AL.
 Religious content: "...all things are under the guidance and direction of an all-wise Disposer, & that all our suffering is intended for our best interest, yet I yield to this weak foolish anxiety for the future."
 [4/2/1831]. Exhortations of Alabama ministers [9/12/1833?]
 School: Discussion with Dr. Beasley, recently resigned provost of Pennsylvania University [5/28/1830]
 Social life: Evaluations of conversational qualities of traveling companions.
 Travel: These are excellent travel diaries, giving descriptions of towns and life on the road. The 1831 diary describes life on a river boat. Long descriptions of Natchez and New Orleans [1831].

The diaries of Anne B. (Francis) Woods also include interesting passages, as summarized in the following notes and extracts:

Arts and culture: Husband Marshall Woods was an art historian. The family made frequent visits to cathedrals and galleries on their 1852 European trip, which Anne discusses at length.
 Childhood: Travels in Europe with two infant children, 1852. Re 8-month-old John: "I seized him and pressed him to my bosom...scarcely ever before realizing how superior he is to other babies." [2/14/1852].
 Class relations: Description of French "galley slaves" (naval prisoners) [1/15/1852]. In general, hostile depictions of the laboring classes by an elite tourist.
 Community: Woods encounters many Americans in Italy, including some Providence friends and family.
 Fashion: Woods sometimes describes her daily wardrobe. Description of Italian village women [2/2/1852]
 Health: Six pages on the intense agony suffered by her husband, who "got a needle stuck in the sole of his foot"; "Oh! Such a day of anxiety never did I pass". [7/27-30/1848]. Suffers a "bilious attack" in Milan; upon leaving town, was "so weak as to have to be carried down stairs & stretched out in the carriage." [7/9/1852].
 Labor: Description of workers in Genoese silk factory [1/27/1852]
 Marriage: First diary describes honeymoon tour of New York, 1848: "almost too happy for this world" [7/18]; "May God preserve him to me as long as I live" [7/22/1848].
 Persons frequently mentioned: European trip with uncle Nicholas Brown III (1792-1859), aunt Caroline Clemens Brown and cousin John Carter Brown (1840-1900) [1/1852]
 Places written: 1) Pittsfield, Mass; Albany, West Point and Utica, N.Y; 2-4) Marseilles, France; Italy
 Religious content: Description of visit to Shaker village near Pittsfield, Mass. [7/16-17/1848]; description of monastery in France: "not a more wicked or debased lott of men exist than these monks & uneducated Catholic priests" [1/19/1852]; "The more I see of these disgusting Catholics the more I detest the whole sect...I can smell a Catholic church a half a mile off" [1/24/1852]. Many other comments on Catholicism. On seeing scenery of the Alps: "How could an infidel exist, I asked myself, when such works of God were before him?" [7/11/1852]
 Social life: At fancy ball in Rome: "I feel so miserably all the time...and so out of spirits that I wish myself anywhere but in such places." [2/18/1852]

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Provenance:

The bulk of these papers passed through the possession of John C.B. Woods, who died unmarried. They were then apparently inherited by his niece Helen Francis (Abbott) Washburn, and then by her son John Carter Brown Washburn. He donated the papers in two gifts in 1970. His widow Eleanor W. Washburn made a related gift of Washburn family papers (including some Woods material) in 1982, supplemented by a bequest from her estate in 1991. The Woods material from these last two gifts has been integrated into the Alva Woods Family papers as series VI, but the remainder of the gifts have been cataloged separately under the title "Washburn Family Papers" (MSS 783). This latter collection includes some material from Abby F. (Woods) Abbott and her family.

The descriptions of the two 1970 gifts in the accession book do not seem to fully account for the scope of the collection. It seems likely that there was another gift prior to 1977 which accounted for the deeds and some of the diaries.

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Processing note:

These papers were processed by Nathaniel N. Shipton in 1977. Each letter was cataloged individually at that time and filed in the library's card catalog, creating a useful correspondent index to the collection. The papers were housed in acid-free folders, but in acidic flat boxes. Series V, the deeds and plats, were left unprocessed. In 2000, series III, IV and V were reprocessed and rehoused by Rick Stattler, and this finding aid was written. Three folders of Woods family deeds and leases were found in the uncataloged Deed Book Collection; these probably arrived with the earliest gift of Woods papers, and were integrated in with the deeds in the main body of the collection. The original organization of the correspondence was maintained in order to retain the utility of the item cataloging. Seventeen maps and plats were transferred to the Graphics Division at that time. Additional material donated by the family from 1983 through 1991 was also appended to the collection in 2000, as Series VI.

The material in series I, II, III and IV had been well cataloged by Shipton in 1977. In 2000, the newly processed material in series V and VI was also cataloged.

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Inventory:

Series I: Correspondence (see Series VI for additional correspondence)

Box 1, Folders 1-95.	1819-1823
Box 2, Folders 96-189.	1824-1830
Box 3, Folders 190-295.	1830-1934
Box 4, Folders 296-352.	1835-1836
Box 5, Folders 353-407.	1837
Box 6, Folders 408-509.	1838-1847
Box 7, Folders 510-617.	1847-1850
Box 8, Folders 618-740.	1851-1857
Box 9, Folders 741-865.	1857-1862
Box 10, Folders 866-910.	1862-1887 and Undated

Series II: Miscellaneous

Box 10, Folder 1.	List of paintings belonging to Alva Woods	Undated
Box 10, Folder 2.	Alva Woods' autograph collection	
Box 10, Folder 3.	Dinner party plan	Undated
Box 10, Folder 4.	Biographical notes on the Woods family; notes on Samuel Woods	
Box 10, Folder 5.	John C.B. Woods: brief for American Screw Company case	1878
Box 10, Folder 6.	Twentieth-century notes on Alva Woods	
Box 10, Folder 7.	Ann B. (Francis) Woods Cookbook	1880

Series III: Diaries (see Series VI for additional diaries)

Box 11, Folder 1.	Alva Woods ("Private Memoranda")	1820-1824
Box 11, Folder 1-2.	Alva Woods	1822-1823 (in Europe); 1883-1887 (in Providence)

Box 11, Folder 1, 3.	Alva Woods (typescript copy)	1822-1823
Box 11, Folder 1, 4.	Almira (Marshall) Woods (see also Almira's 1830 diary attached to a letter dated June 21 1830 in Series I)	1831 (Kentucky to Alabama); 1833 (northern Alabama)
Box 11, Folder 5.	Marshall Woods (see also Marshall's 1869 diary in Series VI)	Jan 1849
Box 11, Folder 6.	Anne B. (Francis) Woods	Jul 1848; Jan - Feb 1852
Box 11, Folder 7.	Anne B. (Francis) Woods	Feb - May 1852; May - Jul 1852
Box 11, Folder 8.	Charles A. Kilvert	1896-1900

Series IV: Notes on religion

Notebooks kept by Alva Woods on theological topics.

Box 11, Folder 1.		1817-1822
Box 11, Folder 2.		1819-1820
Box 11, Folder 3.	("college themes")	1835
Box 11, Folder 4.	"Notes on Christianity"	Undated

Series V: Property documents

Alva & Almira (Marshall) Woods

Box 11, Folder 1.	Rhode Island - Providence	1841-1879
Box 11, Folder 2.	Rhode Island - Warwick	1853-1855

Marshall & Anne B. (Francis) Woods

Box 11, Folder 3.	Indiana	1867-1875
Box 11, Folder 4.	Massachusetts - Attleboro Boston	1859-1863 1872-1898
Box 11, Folder 5.	Rhode Island - Bristol Cranston	1876 1859-1861
Box 11, Folder 6.	Rhode Island - Newport	1859-1886
Box 11, Folder 7.	Rhode Island - Providence - Deeds and agreements	1848-1867
Box 11, Folder 8.	Rhode Island - Providence - Deeds and agreements	1868
Box 11, Folder 9.	Rhode Island - Providence - Deeds and agreements	1869-1895
Box 11, Folder 10.	Rhode Island - Providence - Leases	1847-1863
Box 11, Folder 11.	Rhode Island - Providence - Leases	1864-1876
Box 11, Folder 12.	Rhode Island - Providence - Leases	1877-1896
Box 11, Folder 13.	Rhode Island - Warwick	1842-1891
Box 11, Folder 14.	Brown U. Committee on Corporations - Extracts re Land Grant schools,	1862-1869
Box 11, Folder 15.	Nicholas Brown estate - Rawson Fountain Society shares	1853-1919
Box 11, Folder 16.	Anne C.B. Woods will Anne C.B. Woods estate Alva Woods estate	1849 1896 1887
Box 11, Folder 17.	Miscellaneous	1849-1869

Deed of life insurance policy	1849
Deed of pew at First Baptist Church	1849
Tax return for carriage and silver plate	1863
Extract from will of John Brown Francis	1864
Deed of shares in Housatonic Railroad Company	1869

John C.B. Woods:

Box 11, Folder 18.	Rhode Island - Providence - Arcade / Butler-Duncan case	1827, 1894-1922
Box 11, Folder 19.	Rhode Island - Providence - Whitman Block power of attorney	1908-1910
Box 11, Folder 20.	Rhode Island - Providence - Miscellaneous	1899-1923
Box 11, Folder 21.	Rhode Island - Warwick	1900-1903
Box 11, Folder 22.	Marshall Woods power of attorney and estate	1897-1899
Box 11, Folder 23.	Miscellaneous Deed of Providence National Bank shares Agreement between Turk's Head Estate and King Fruit Store	1886-1909 1886 1909

Series VI: Later AccessionsAlva and Almira (Marshall) Woods

Box 12, Folder 1.	Correspondence	1837-1850
Box 12, Folder 2.	Correspondence	Jan - Jun 1853
Box 12, Folder 3.	Correspondence	Jul - Dec 1853
Box 12, Folder 4.	Correspondence	1855-1886 and Undated
Box 12, Folder 5.	Deed to Josiah Marshall	1853
Box 12, Folder 6.	Inventory of assets Specifications for Warwick Neck house	1849-1870 1854

Marshall Woods

Box 12, Folder 7.	Correspondence	1848-1863 and Undated
Box 12, Folder 8.	Correspondence	1870, 1882, 1887
Box 12, Folder 9.	Account book Expense book in Europe	1842-1856 1851-1852
Box 12, Folder 10.	Brown University - extracts from minutes	c. 1769-1880
Box 12, Folder 11.	Brown University - Francis Wayland Bust committee	1860-1861, 1889
Box 12, Folder 12.	Brown University - miscellaneous	c. 1882
Box 12, Folder 13.	Diary	1869
Box 12, Folder 14.	Letter book	1879-1884
Box 12, Folder 15.	Letter book	1886
Box 12, Folder 16.	Letter book	1893-1894
Box 12, Folder 17.	Miscellaneous Four documents re Paris exposition Inventory of household silver Diplomatic certificates Documents re Prov., Warren & Bristol RR	1853-1872 1853 1862 1855, 1870 1871-1872

Anne B. (Francis) Woods

Box 12, Folder 18.	Correspondence	1858-1877
Box 12, Folder 19.	Correspondence	1863
	Correspondence from John Brown Francis	Undated
Box 12, Folder 20.	Correspondence from daughter Abby	Jan - Feb 1870
Box 12, Folder 21.	Correspondence from daughter Abby	Mar - Apr 1870
Box 12, Folder 22.	Correspondence from daughter Abby	May - Jun 1870
Box 12, Folder 23.	Correspondence from daughter Abby	Jul - Aug 1870
Box 12, Folder 24.	Correspondence from daughter Abby	Sep - Oct 1870
Box 12, Folder 25.	Expense book, Paris	1854-1855
	Prescription book, Paris	1855
Box 12, Folder 26.	Will and codicil	Undated

John C.B. Woods

Box 12, Folder 27.	Correspondence	1882-1923 and Undated
Box 12, Folder 28.	Correspondence	1927-1928
Box 12, Folder 29.	School report card	1864
	Brown University material	1868-1873
Box 12, Folder 30.	Diary and memorandum book	Jul - Aug 1871
Box 12, Folder 31.	Extracts from letters of parents and grandparents	1853
Box 12, Folder 32.	Family historical notes	Undated
Box 12, Folder 33.	Family paintings - certificates of authenticity and notes	1843-1916
Box 12, Folder 34.	Obituaries	1930
Box 12, Folder 35.	Political scrapbook	1882

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Subjects:

In 2000, the following entries were added to the item-level card catalog entries made in 1977.

Abbott, Abby F. (Woods), 1849-1895.

African Methodist Episcopal Church (Providence, R.I.)

Art - Rhode Island.

Brown University (Providence, R.I.)

Brown, John Carter, 1797-1874.

Butler-Duncan Land Company.

Crockett, David, 1786-1836.

Diaries, 1869.

Diaries, 1871.

Europe - Description and travel.

Francis, John Brown, 1791-1864.

Goddard, William, 1825-1907.

Howard University.

Lincoln, John Sullivan, 1811-1888.

Murfee, James Thomas, 1833-1912.

Park, Edwards A., 1808-1900.

Porter, Noah, 1811-1892.

Prisons - Kentucky.

Providence Arcade Corporation.

Providence (R.I.) - Social life and customs.
Read, John Meredith, 1837-1896.
Rhode Island - Politics and government, 1865-1950.
River boats - Mississippi River.
Washburn, Helen F. (Abbott), 1874-1969.
Wayland, Francis, 1796-1865.
Woods, Almira (Marshall), 1804-1863.
Woods, Alva, 1794-1887.
Woods, Anne B. (Francis), 1828-1896.
Woods, John C.B., 1851-1930.
Woods, Marshall, 1824-1899.

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