

**William A. Brodie (1841-1917)**  
**Collection**  
**A Finding Aid**



**Livingston County Historian's Office**  
5 Murray Hill Dr.  
Mt. Morris, NY 14510  
January 2015

## I. Collection Summary

<b>Title</b>	William A. Brodie (1841-1917) Collection
<b>Collection No.</b>	C102
<b>Extent</b>	William A. Brodie Collection, 9 cubic feet, 25 boxes; Other materials, 2 folders, 1 reel microfilm
<b>Date Range</b>	Roughly 1830-1980
<b>Date Bulk</b>	1860-1910
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The collection relates to the Brodie and Coddington families of Geneseo, New York, particularly William A. Brodie and his descendants. Includes New York State Masons reports and correspondence, Statue of Liberty cornerstone ceremony documents, Geneseo Normal School documents, Geneseo Presbyterian Sunday school lessons and photographs, Wadsworth Estate documents, County Treasurer reports, William A. Brodie's personal and business correspondence, deeds, personal writing, annals, and letterbooks. Holdings also include Martha A. Woodbury Brodie's diaries and annals, Warren J. Brodie's personal and business correspondence, Mary Elizabeth Coddington Dixon's personal records and diplomas, and Margaret McDowell Coddington's concert programs and correspondence. Other assorted receipts, accounts, letters, clippings, and correspondence also included. Photographs of William A. Brodie, the Brodie family, the Coddington family, and family residences also contained in collection.</p>
<b>Subjects</b>	<p>Citizen's League of Geneseo Geneseo Gas Light Company Geneseo, New York Geneseo Normal School Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York Livingston County Historical Society Lochside—Conesus Lake Second Presbyterian Church of Geneseo Statue of Liberty Wadsworth Homestead, Geneseo William Letchworth Association</p>
<b>Names</b>	<p>Austen Family Baker Family Brodie, Laura A. Diver (1841-1885) Brodie, Martha A Woodbury Brodie, Marion Brodie, Mary Wilson (1818-1859) Brodie, Warren James "Wan" (1863-1945) Brodie, William (1820-1892) Brodie, William A. (1841-1917) Coddington, James Return (1856-1927) Coddington, Margaret McDowell (1895-1982) Coddington, McDowell Jane Brodie "Doolie" (1856-1897) Coddington, William Brodie Diver, Ruth</p>

**Names, cont'd.** Diver / Divers Family  
Dixon, Mary Elizabeth Coddington (1887-1984)  
Dixon, Walter Whitcomb  
Dixon, Walter Whitcomb, Jr. "Dick"  
Huston, Alexander  
Lansing Family  
Mitchell, Anna Caroline "Carol"  
Wadsworth, General James Samuel (1807-1864)  
Wahl, Sheron McNeil Dixon

**Languages** English.

**Access and  
Restrictions**

Use of the documents in the collection is for serious research and by request and permission of the Livingston County Historian's Office. Any use of the material in publications must be cited as follows, "Courtesy of Livingston County Historian's Office, New York". Additionally, all documents should be handled with care.

To arrange to conduct research with the documents in the collection, contact the Livingston County Historian by mail at: 5 Murray Hill Drive, Mount Morris, NY, by phone at (585) 243-7955 or by e-mail at [historian@livingstoncountyny.gov](mailto:historian@livingstoncountyny.gov).

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## II. Biographical and Background Information

### William A. Brodie

William A. Brodie was born in Kilbarchan, Scotland in 1841 to William Brodie (c. 1820-1892) and Mary Wilson Brodie (1818-1859). The family immigrated to the United States in 1843, settling in Rochester, NY. In his adolescence, W. A. Brodie worked in a dry goods store in the city.

In 1862, he married Laura A. Diver from Henrietta, NY, a painter at the Hudson River School. They had one son, Warren "Wan" James Brodie, in 1863. W. A. Brodie relocated to Geneseo, NY about the same year, where he began working in the office for the General James S. Wadsworth estate. A few years later, he became the business manager for Major W. A. Wadsworth. By 1873 becoming the general agent and administrator for the entire Wadsworth Estate, a role in which he continued for the duration of his years.

In 1873, the Wadsworth Estate deeded a plot of land at 20 Main Street in Geneseo to W. A. Brodie. On April 14, 1874, construction of the Italianate residence was begun, and the Brodie family moved in the following year. The Wadsworth's carpenter was hired to create custom furniture for the library in the house. The home remained in the family until 1988 when it was sold.

W. A. Brodie also established a waterfront property on a point of Conesus Lake, which came to be known as Lochside. The family gathered there in the summer for swimming and sailing.

A man of deep faith, W. A. Brodie was a Senior Elder in the Second Presbyterian Church of Geneseo beginning in 1867. He served as the Sunday school teacher in Geneseo for decades until the end of his life.

W. A. Brodie was also very active in the local chapter of the Masons, achieving the position of Grand Master for the State of New York in 1884. Among the many ceremonial cornerstone events in which he participated, in 1884 he laid the cornerstone of the Statue of Liberty. The same year, he achieved the prestigious 33<sup>rd</sup> Degree.

W. A. Brodie was a remarkably active man in his community. He is most noted for founding the Geneseo Normal School and continuously worked for supportive legislation. Additionally, he was a prominent member of the Livingston County Historical Society since its beginnings in the late 1870s, fulfilling roles as secretary and president; he served as the County Treasurer for five consecutive terms, from 1878 to 1893; he was President of the Geneseo Gas Light Company from about 1894 to 1917. Finally, he was involved in the William Letchworth Association and the Citizen's League of Geneseo.

His wife, Laura A. Diver Brodie, died in 1885 of consumption. Young McDowell "Doolie" Jane Brodie Coddington cared for the household until her brother W. A. Brodie remarried, uniting with Martha A. Woodbury in 1889. She was a young member of faculty at the Geneseo Normal School and originally from Royalston, Massachusetts. Her first cousin was Charles Woodbury, his daughter being the noted collector Margaret Woodbury Strong. She joined the Presbyterian Church in Geneseo and attended W. A. Brodie's Sunday

School class. She lived until 1933, leaving her house to her step-son, Warren "Wan" James Brodie, who could not bear to sell it, so closed it up.

In 1917 W. A. Brodie suffered a stroke while conducting a prayer meeting and died shortly thereafter. His estate was primarily passed on to his only son, Warren "Wan" James Brodie, via his widow, Martha A. Woodbury Brodie.

In 1976 the New York State College at Geneseo dedicated their new Fine Arts building to William A. Brodie.

### **Warren "Wan" James Brodie**

W. A. Brodie's only son, "Wan" was born in Rochester, NY, in 1863. He attended Rutgers College, graduating about 1886. He worked for John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company in Cleveland, OH, and was involved in amateur journalism. He was married late in life to Helen Virginia Reynolds and had no children, dying in 1945. Loehside was left to William Brodie Coddington, his first cousin, and 20 Main St. went to Margaret McDowell Coddington.

### **McDowell "Doolie" Jane Brodie Coddington**

"Doolie," who was born approximately 1856 and died in 1897, was the younger sister of W. A. Brodie. It is possible that since their mother had died in 1859, the little girl was raised by W. A. Brodie and his wife Laura. She married James Return Coddington of Elmira in 1886. J. R. Coddington (1856-1927) was a grocer in Geneseo and a hospital administrator for New Haven Hospital in New Haven, CT, from 1905-1908. They had three children, Mary Elizabeth Coddington Dixon, William Brodie Coddington, and Margaret McDowell Coddington.

### **Mary Elizabeth Coddington Dixon**

The daughter of McDowell "Doolie" J. Brodie Coddington and James R. Coddington and niece of W. A. Brodie, Mary was born in 1887 at 20 Main St., Geneseo. She attended the Geneseo Normal School, acquiring a degree for teaching kindergarten, which she applied in White Plains, NY for a time. She married Walter Whitcomb Dixon of West Bloomfield in 1919, the owner of Rochester company Aseptico Laboratories. Their one son, Walter "Dick" Whitcomb Dixon, Jr., was born in 1926. Mary Elizabeth Coddington Dixon died in 1984.

### **William Brodie Coddington**

Born in 1891, William was the second child of James R. Coddington and McDowell "Doolie" J. Brodie Coddington and nephew of W. A. Brodie. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War I and married Anna Caroline "Carol" Mitchell. One of their two sons, William Brodie Coddington, Jr., served in the Army in World War II.

### **Margaret McDowell Coddington**

The youngest daughter of James R. Coddington and McDowell "Doolie" J. Brodie Coddington, Margaret (1895-1982) was the youngest niece of W. A. Brodie. She never married, but led a fulfilled life devoted to music. She lived in Philadelphia, PA, teaching piano and writing reviews for the Philadelphia Orchestra. She returned to her hometown of Geneseo, and to 20 Main St., about 1945 after the death of her cousin Warren "Wan" J. Brodie, and was a prominent piano instructor until she retired in 1975; she passed away in 1982.

## **Sheron McNeil Dixon Wahl**

The donor of the William A. Brodie Collection, Sheron married Walter “Dick” Dixon Jr., son of Walter Whitcomb Dixon and Mary E. Coddington, and they lived at Webster, NY. Sheron’s husband, Walter Dixon, inherited the Brodie homestead at 20 Main St., Geneseo, upon the decease of his aunt, Margaret McDowell Coddington; no other member of the family was interested in the home or its contents. In 1988, the house was sold due to the expense of owning two properties, and the contents of the Geneseo house, practically a museum of Brodie and Coddington family heirlooms and ephemera, went to Webster and the Dixons’ townhouse in Kennebunk, ME. After Walter “Dick” Dixon’s death in 2003, Sheron remarried and removed to Kennebunk, sending to auction a great deal of the material from the Brodie/Coddington house and donating the ephemera to the Livingston County Historian’s Office in the summer of 2009.

### **III. Contents List**

#### **Box 1 – William A. Brodie: Masonic Documents**

- 1a. Masonic reports
- 1b. Masonic correspondence

#### **Box 2 – William A. Brodie: Masonic and Statue of Liberty Documents**

- 2a. Statue of Liberty cornerstone ceremony
- 2b. Misc. Masonic documents
- 2c. Masonic booklets

#### **Box 3 – William A. Brodie: Sunday School Documents and His Death**

- 3a. Sunday school lessons
- 3b. Estate papers
- 3c. Misc. documents (letters/newspaper articles) about death of William A. Brodie

#### **Box 4 – William A. Brodie: County Treasurer Documents**

- 4a. Misc. County Treasurer documents
- 4b. County Treasurer reports: 1872, 1878, 1893

#### **Box 5 – William A. Brodie: Personal and Business Documents**

- 5a. Deeds and correspondence relating to real estate
- 5b. Misc. speeches and writing, including trip diaries from Scotland
- 5c. James S. Wadsworth and Craig W. Wadsworth letters and papers, c. 1902-1916
- 5d. George Austen and Sweet Briar documents and others, 1861-1908

#### **Box 6 – William A. Brodie: Geneseo Normal School/SUNY Geneseo**

- 6a. Normal School documents

**Note:** Box 7 of this collection was reorganized in July 2023. Each letter was unfolded and organized into thematic groups resulting in the creation of Boxes 7 and 7A.

#### **Box 7 – William A. Brodie Masonic Correspondence**

- F1. Masonic Letters to W.A. Brodie 1880 & 1870
- F2. Masonic Letters to W.A. Brodie 1881
- F3. Masonic Letters to W.A. Brodie 1882
- F4. Masonic Letter to W.A. Brodie 1883
- F5. Masonic Letters to W.A. Brodie 1884
- F6. Masonic Letters from NY Districts to W.A. Brodie 1884

- F7. Masonic Letters to W.A. Brodie 1885
- F8. Correspondence with J. Edward Simmons to W.A. Brodie
- F9. Correspondence with Frank R. Lawrence to W.A. Brodie
- F10. Correspondence with George H. Raymond to W.A. Brodie
- F11. Correspondence with E.M. Ehlers to W.A. Brodie
- F12. Correspondence with J.R. Schlick to W.A. Brodie
- F13. Correspondence with Edmund L. Judson to W.A. Brodie

**Box 7A – William A. Brodie Correspondence and Misc. Documents**

- F1. Personal Correspondence to W.A. Brodie
- F2. Wadsworth Correspondence to W.A. Brodie
- F3. Business with Martin Brimmer
- F4. Business with Martin Brimmer cont.
- F5. Correspondence with Frederick Vance Doty to W.A. Brodie
- F6. Correspondence with Alonzo B. Cornell to W.A. Brodie
- F7. Politics and Legal Dealings Correspondence
- F8. Misc. Business Correspondence
- F9. Citizens League of Geneseo
- F10. Geneseo Gas & Light Co.
- F11. Associations
- F12. Post-1917 Correspondence

**Box 8 – William A. Brodie: Bound Materials**

- 8a. Oversized letterbooks
- 8b. Misc. personal books: 1900 account book, house directory notebooks, autograph album, large annals book

**Box 9 – Margaret McDowell Coddington: Personal Record Books**

- 9a. Personal records and journals: 1943-1949; 1951-1957

**Box 10 – Margaret McDowell Coddington: Personal Record Books and Effects**

- 10a. Personal records and journals: 1958-1962; 1976-1978
- 10b. Misc., including passport, cashbooks, guestbooks and roll book

**Box 11 – Margaret McDowell Coddington: Music Career**

- 11a. Concert programs: 1914-1946 (bulk 1920s-1930s)
- 11b. Misc. letters, notes, and newspaper clippings
- 11c. Correspondence
- 11d. Misc., including church papers, brochures, cloth from hat

**Box 12 – Coddington and Brodie Family Documents**

- 12a. Coddington family correspondence regarding McDowell "Doolie" Jane Brodie Coddington's death
- 12b. James Return Coddington and McDowell "Doolie" Jane Brodie Coddington's correspondence
- 12c. Letters from William Brodie Coddington<sup>1</sup> during World War I
- 12d. Estate papers concerning Laura A. Brodie, Ruth Diver (including Ruth Diver's will), and Alexander Huston's life insurance papers
- 12e. Misc. family records and receipts
- 12f. Family wedding and death announcements

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<sup>1</sup> William A. Brodie's nephew

- 12g. Misc. documents, including Walter "Dick" Dixon, Jr's<sup>2</sup> school certificate
- 12h. Brodie estate auction inventory and genealogical material from Sheron Dixon<sup>3</sup>

**Box 13 – Martha A. Woodbury Brodie: Bound Materials**

- 13a. Diaries (various years between 1889-1927), address books, annals, notebooks, and an unassociated guestbook

**Box 14 – Warren "Wan" James Brodie: Correspondence and Misc. Documents**

*Part 1:* 14a. Correspondence to Warren James Brodie, abt. 1882-1884

14b. Correspondence to Warren James Brodie, abt. 1885-1886

14c.1. Correspondence to Warren James Brodie, abt. 1887-1888

*Part 2:* 14c.2. Correspondence to Warren James Brodie, abt. 1887-1888, continued

14d. Invitations and calling cards from friends of Warren James Brodie

14e. Correspondence to Warren James Brodie from Florence Lansing

14f. Correspondence from Warren James Brodie to others

14g. Correspondence and accounts from Warren James Brodie to Martha A. Woodbury Brodie, 1931-1932

14h. Misc. accounts and receipts

*Part 3:* 14i. Academic work while at Rutgers University

14j. Postcards

14k. Bound materials: autograph book and diaries (1881 and 1883)

**Box 15 – Family Ephemera**

15a. Marion Brodie's<sup>4</sup> hymn book, 1833

15b. William A. Brodie's bookplate stamp and bookplates

15c. Commemorative coins (including Masonic coin) and stamps (bulk 1920s)

15d. Misc.: ivory letter opener; assorted keys; copper negative blocks of William A. Brodie; 3 glass negatives of William A. Brodie's Sunday school class

**Box 16 – Coddington Family Photographs**

16a. Photographs of James Return Coddington, William Brodie Coddington, Carol Coddington, and others

16b. Snapshot collections: Lake house, Coddington family, unidentified photographs

16c. Intact birchbark album of Coddington family photographs

16d. Oversized photographs

16e. Unidentified and misc. photographs

16f. Daguerreotypes

**Box 17 – Coddington Family Photographs: 18-20 Main Street, Geneseo and Lochside**

*Part 1:* 17a. McDowell "Doolie" Jane Brodie Coddington, James Return Coddington, and their children Mary Elizabeth Coddington, William Brodie Coddington, and Margaret McDowell Coddington's childhood

17b. Unidentified and misc. photographs

17c. Photographs of houses and places

*Part 2:* 17d. Intact photo album

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<sup>2</sup> William A. Brodie's grand nephew

<sup>3</sup> Wife of Walter "Dick" Dixon, Jr.; William A. Brodie's grand niece

<sup>4</sup> Possibly William A. Brodie's great aunt

17e. Photographs from hospital where James Return Coddington was Hospital Administrator

**Box 18 – Brodie and Woodbury Family Photographs**

*Part 1:* 18a. Brodie and Divers photographs

18b. Woodbury photographs

18c. Baker photographs

18d. Photographs of places

18e. Identified misc. photographs

18f. Unidentified photographs

*Part 2:* 18g. Oversized misc. photographs

18h. Oversized Wadsworth photographs

18i. Intact purple velvet photo album, mostly unidentified portraits

18j. Small intact photo album

**Box 19 – Margaret McDowell Coddington's Photographs and Memorabilia**

*Part 1:* 19a. Coddington, Dixon, and Brodie family photographs

19b.1. Misc. photographs of family, friends, and places

*Part 2:* 19b.2. Misc. photographs of family, friends, and places, continued

19c. Collections of photographs of places (vacations, etc)

19d. Negatives

19e. Misc. postcards and Christmas letters to Margaret McDowell Coddington

19f. Misc. pictures and articles

19g. Collated contents of Margaret McDowell Coddington's 1975 scrapbook honoring her retirement; thank-you notes and photographs of her Geneseo piano students

19h. Large intact photo album with photographs of Coddingtons and friends

20a.1. Mary Elizabeth Coddington's oversize diplomas:

Geneseo Normal School for Classical teaching, 1908 and Geneseo Normal School for Primary Kindergarten Course, 1909

**Box 20 – Mary Elizabeth Coddington<sup>5</sup>: School and Teaching**

20a.2. Graduate study certificates (kindergarten studies courses, 1911 and 1912)

20b. Drawings from the Normal School, 1903-1904

20c. Compositions, speeches, and notes

20d. Correspondence and recommendations for teaching positions

20e. Misc. fundraising material from Junior Systematic Givers

**IV. Related Materials**

**Livingston County Historian's Office**

**Family Folders**

- Brodie
- Coddington

**Family Folder Originals**

- Summary of a talk by William A. Brodie, 1917

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<sup>5</sup> William A. Brodie's niece

**Microfilm**

- William A. Brodie Scrapbook, 1867-1875

**Photographs**

- Three-paneled framed photograph of William A. Brodie and two Masonic brothers

**203-R14-S1-B1**

William A. Brodie with Pan Presbyterian Delegates, Liverpool, England, 1904

**B20-F4** William A. Brodie, Jane Brodie (5 items)

**Subject Binders, including:**

- Geneseo Normal School and SUNY Geneseo
- Livingston County Historical Society
- Second Presbyterian Church of Geneseo

**Additional Resources**

- Livingston County Historical Society
  - <http://www.livingstoncountyhistoricalsociety.com>
- Milne Library, SUNY Geneseo
  - <http://www.geneseo.edu/library>