

Guide to the Addoms Family Papers, 1763-1872

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Special Collections
Benjamin F. Feinberg Library
Plattsburgh State University College
Plattsburgh, N.Y. 12901

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Introduction

This collection is of particular interest to researchers studying the social history of nineteenth century Plattsburgh. History is oftentimes best understood through the personal and professional letters left behind by departed individuals. The Addoms (also spelled Addams) Family Papers consists of such correspondences and gives invaluable insight into the realities of North Country living in the nineteenth century. The records in this particular collection encompass the years 1763 through 1872. During this time period, three generations of Addoms conducted business, wrote to one another and about each other in letters and diaries, and also recorded their observations and feelings in journals and in school compositions. As one of Plattsburgh's earliest families, the records they left behind serve as a fascinating testament to life in early America.

Among the earliest records in the collection are documents left behind by John Addoms (1737-1823). Addoms migrated from Dutchess County, New York, where he owned a large tract of land. This particular holding had been granted to him by King George III prior to 1776. He joined the American cause at the outbreak of the American Revolution. Addoms served as a surveyor and civil engineer and quickly rose to the rank of major. According to tradition, Addoms and the troops he commanded, laid the chain that blocked British ships from infiltrating the Hudson River and West Point. Mr. Addoms is also rumored to have held the hat of condemned British spy, Major John Andre as he was led to the gallows. André had been sentenced to death for his role in Benedict Arnold's plot to betray West Point to the British in 1780.

After his service in the Revolution, John Addoms obtained land in Plattsburgh. He moved and settled his family in the area and was instrumental in attracting other settlers to Northern New York. Addoms, with slave labor to aid his efforts, built a farm in 1790 on Cumberland Head. He remained there until his death. The farm has been preserved

and contains a small family cemetery and a separate burial ground for Mr. Addoms' slaves.

The Addoms' Family Papers also contains records from John Addoms' son, Mr. John Townsend Addoms (1781-1868). J.T. Addoms was a well-known Methodist Episcopal minister. He married Harriet Young of West Plattsburgh and had eight children with her, five of whom died between the ages of thirteen and twenty. One child died in infancy. Mr. and Mrs. J.T. Addoms were also deeply involved in the early temperance movement. Mr. Addoms was an early and outspoken leader of the movement.

The majority of the documents (correspondences, diaries, journals, school compositions, etc.) in the Addoms' Family Papers are those of Reverend J. T. Addoms and his family. These records span the time period 1820-1872 and provide unique insight into the Addoms' family life. Many of the documents detail the development of the Addoms children, their schooling, and their interactions with one another and friends. Other documents dated from this time period concern the tragic events occurring between February 25, 1839 and May 20, 1844 in which five of the Addoms' children passed away. Poignant diary passages recount the heartbreak one Addoms' daughter endured as she watched two of her siblings pass away within three months of each other. Also within the pages of her diary are elegies composed for her lost siblings. These documents not only illustrate a dark and trying period in the Addoms' family life, they also demonstrate the harsh realities of life in the nineteenth century.

Also included in the collection are documents involving deaths among Reverend Addoms' congregation. Many of the miscellaneous materials in the collection concern death and dying in the form of poems, obituary scrapbooks, various memorials, and religious literature.

The collection contains two letters from the War of 1812 and eight letters from the Civil War era.

Background Sources in Special Collections

Everest, Allan S. *Pioneer Homes of Clinton County, 1790-1870*. Plattsburgh, N.Y.: Clinton County Historical Association, 1966.

Microfilms

"Historical Department: John Townsend Addoms." *Plattsburgh Republican*, 20 Nov. 1909: p. 3, col. 3.

“Sketch of life of Major John Addoms.” *Plattsburgh Republican*, 1 Oct. 1910: p. 4, col. 2-4.

Files

File 85/3: A list of descendants of the Reverend John Townsend Addoms and pertinent dates.

Contents of the Addoms Family Papers

The collection is housed in three Hollinger boxes and further subdivided by consecutively numbered folders.

Photocopies of these materials are filed in the appropriate folders within the boxes and the originals are not available except through permission of the Special Collections Librarian.

Box 1: CORRESPONDENCE 1793-1872

Folder	Contents
1	Jan. 16, 1793-Aug. 24, 1809
2	Sept. 9, 1809-March 6, 1816
3	May 13, 1816-Nov. 10, 1819
4	Dec. 8, 1819-Jan. 30, 1826
5	July 10, 1826-Jan. 26, 1836
6	March 2, 1837-May 26, 1844
7	Oct. 25, 1846-March 13, 1860
8	Aug. 12, 1860-Nov. 30, 1860
9	Nov. 30, 1866-April 1, 1872
10	Undated Correspondence

Business Accounts: Bills and Receipts, 1787-1856

11	1787-1799
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- 12 1801-1810
- 13 1811-1815
- 14 1816-1820
- 15 1821-1830
- 16 1831-1840
- 17 1841-1850
- 18 1851-1856
- 19 Undated Business Accounts

Cashier Checks, 1823-1824

- 20 Oct. 7, 1823 - Sept. 20, 1824

Business Contracts, 1763-1829

- 21 March 14, 1763 - May 5, 1829
- 22 Unexecuted Contracts

BOX 2: MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

- 23 Baptismal Certificate
- 24 Composition Book

Compositions

- 25 Elizabeth Addoms
- 26 Harriet Addoms
- 27 Janet Addoms
- 28 Julia Addoms
- 29 Julia Addoms
- 30 Mary Addoms

- 31 William Addoms
- 32 Dates--Birth, Death, Marriage

Estate Papers

- 33 John Addoms, Esq.
- 34 John T. Addoms
- 35 Jonas Addoms

Miscellaneous Other Materials

- 36 Fashion Cutouts
- 37 Inspirational Message
- 38 Journals
- 39 Memorandum Book
- 40 Moral Reform Society Records
- 41 Obituary
- 42 Photograph
- 43 Poems
- 44 Real Estate: Locations, Descriptions
- 45 School Assignments
- 46 School Workbooks
- 47 Scrapbooks
- 48 Court Summons
- 49 Teaching Certificates
- 50 Fragments
- 51 Wrapping Paper

52 Wedding Memento

BOX 3

53 Bible

54 Wallet