

# **Guide to the George M. Beckwith Papers**

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

By  
**Richard D. Doina, Jr.**  
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Revised by  
**Laura Perras**  
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## **Introduction**

The Beckwith Papers, now shelved in Feinberg Library's Special Collections, were originally donated to the Clinton County Historical Association by Mrs. Robert Bier. The Papers were then loaned to Plattsburgh State's library by the Historical Association. The items in this collection provide an exceptional portrait of the Beckwith family and their contributions to the then developing North Country.

The collection primarily consists of indentures, deeds and agreements pertaining to George M. Beckwith. Some topics include Saranac Academy, which was in grave financial trouble during the time period that the Beckwith Papers span. The collection also includes personal accounts, genealogical information, and the will of John Boynton.

Prior to migrating to upstate New York, the Beckwith family resided in Lyme, Connecticut. In 1810 Baruch Beckwith (1775-1855) moved his family to Beekmantown, New York, where he practiced medicine until 1850. While continuing his medical practice, he also pursued a political career. In 1821, Beckwith became the first Beekmantown Town Supervisor and held that office until 1822 and then again from 1831 to 1832. He married Lucy Mather (1777-1859), a descendent of Increase Mather, and on June 27, 1805, their only child, George M. Beckwith was born.

George M. Beckwith attended Beekmantown Common School and Plattsburgh Academy. After graduation, he began studying medicine under his father's tutelage, but later changed to a law career studying under J. B. L. Skinner. After serving as the deputy to the county clerk, Beckwith was admitted to the bar in 1832. Like his father, George M. Beckwith was also active in politics. In 1840, he was elected to the State Assembly on the Whig ticket and in 1864 was appointed a United States Commissioner. Beckwith held this position until 1871, when he was elected as a Republican county

judge. Throughout his political career, Beckwith continued to practice law; with William Swetland until 1847, with a man named Johnson until 1860, and eventually with his sons, George H. and Benjamin M. Beckwith.

On February 20, 1833, George M. Beckwith married Hannah Elizabeth Mooers, the granddaughter of General Benjamin Mooers. Together, the couple had four children: George H. (b. 1834), Benjamin M. (b. 1837), Margaret L. (b. 1840), and Lucy M. (b. 1845). George H. Beckwith was admitted to the bar in 1860. Approximately around that time, he married Emery F. Vilas. The couple had five children: Anna, Grace, Samuel, Harriet, and Margaret.

**See also: Collection 86.4, Margaret Beckwith Reed Collection of Diaries and Letters**