

Guide to the Keese Family Letters

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Special Collections
Benjamin F. Feinberg Library
SUNY Plattsburgh
Plattsburgh, New York

By
Kathryn Stanley
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Introduction

Richard Keese Jr. was the son of one of the founding settlers of Keeseville, New York, Richard Keese. The father moved to the North Country in 1791 and settled at the Peru Union. After Richard, Jr.'s birth in 1794, the family moved to Anderson's Falls, later renamed Keeseville, where Richard Sr. started an iron business and made significant land purchases.

In 1815, Richard Jr. entered into the iron industry, and by 1820, had set up his own forge at the upper dam and later expanded his business to include sales of iron and nails. He was a director and stockholder of the Keeseville Manufacturing Company; Vice President of the Essex County Bank; Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Clinton County; and, in 1826, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. A staunch Democrat Republican, he was honored in 1839 with a visit by President Martin Van Buren. After retiring from the iron business, Keese became the secretary of the Clinton and Essex Mutual Insurance Company, but was mainly concerned with his role as Judge of Common Pleas.

In 1817, Richard married Lydia Hurlburt of Ferrisburgh, Vermont, and they had eight children together. The only two of their children to survive to old age were Hurlburt and James. One daughter, Phebe, moved to New Orleans around 1840, where she married a John Peter Nelson. Richard Keese lived to the age of 89, and was the last surviving member of the 20th Congress. His obituary in the Plattsburgh Republican of February 10th, 1883, declared him

As a friend, he is warm and sincere; in business, he is intelligent, enterprising and successful; as a neighbor he is beloved . . . ardent, and honest, . . . in whose integrity is justly reposed unlimited confidence, . . . one in whom his country has an advocate and fast friend in adversity, as well as in prosperity.

Background Sources in Special Collections

Circle Of Kings Daughters. *Old Keeseville Tales*. Elizabethtown, N. Y.: Denton Publications Inc., 1976.

Hurd, Duane H. *History of Clinton and Franklin Counties, New York*. Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1880, p. 352.
McLellan Collection Cemetery Records, Vols. 4 ,7.

Contents

This collection is comprised ten folders of letters written between members of the family of Richard Keese II. Most of the letters are concerned with family life, are between the Keese, Hurlburt, and Nelson families, and span 1832 to 1849. The first letter in Folder Three comments on the proposed 1839 visit to Keeseville by President Van Buren.

BOX 1:

- Folder 1: Letters from Richard Keese 2nd, father. 1841-1847
- 2: Letters from Mrs. Lydia H Keese, mother. 1840-1847
- 3: Letters from Julia K Nelson, daughter. 1839 and 1840
- 4 Letters from John Peter Nelson, son-in-law. 1840-1849
- 5. Letter from Cynthia Hurlburt, Lydia's sister. Aug 14th 18uu
- 6. Letters from John Peter Nelson, son-in-law. 1840
- 7. Letters from Phebe N Hurlburt, Lydia's sister. 1838, 1840, 1845, 18uu
- 8. Letters from Phebe H Keese, daughter. From 1838
- 9. Letters from Emily Rogers, family friend. 1832-1840
- 10. Letters from Mary Ellen Keese, daughter. 1840