

Sperry Family Papers

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

by
Richard D. Doina, Jr.
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Introduction

Deposited in Special Collections by the Clinton County Historical Association, the Sperry papers contain correspondence, business accounts, bills and personal papers of several family members.

Little is known about the Sperry family. From Hurd's History of Clinton and Franklin Counties, it is learned that Gilead Sperry was admitted to the New York State bar in 1808 and began practicing law in the Plattsburgh area. On May 20, 1812, Gilead married Catherine Marsh of Plattsburgh and the 1820 census reports that the couple had two children under 10.

Gilead served as a captain in the militia during the War of 1812 with Major General Benjamin Mooers' division. In 1817 he escorted President Monroe to Sacketts Harbor during Monroe's tour of the Northern states. Gilead died in 1825 at Plattsburgh.

Born in 1817, Gilead's son George (1817-1879) attended the Plattsburgh Academy until age 14, at which time he was sent to Keeseville to learn the trade of a millwright. Upon completing his apprenticeship he moved to Chambly, Quebec, Canada, where he met Emiley C. Ripley, whom he married in 1850. This union produced six children: Gilead A. (b. 1851), Ripley (b. 1853), Catherine (b. 1859), Carrie (b. 1859), and George Jr. (b. 1862). The name of the sixth child does not appear in the 1820 census. The family remained in Canada until 1856 when their property was destroyed by fire. Then they moved back to Plattsburgh.

Giving up his occupation as a millwright, George became a surveyor and served the Plattsburgh community in numerous ways. He assumed such duties as town assessor (1859), Commissioner of Highways (1869), was a member of the fire department and served jury duty in 1876. George Sperry died in 1897 at the age of 80. He was survived by his wife and three of his children: Ripley who had moved to Vermont, Kate who had become a teacher at the Broad Street Primary school in 1873, and one other whose name is not known.

The Sperry Family Papers contain two types of correspondence. The first consists of personal papers, such as letters from family members or friends, while the second type pertains to legal and business papers. These papers include official papers such as notification of appointments to certain positions and land holdings. Covering the period 1806 to 1926, the later material emphasizes genealogical correspondence and is contained in Folder 9. The correspondence to George Sperry (1817-1897) often discusses possible business opportunities for him while he was a millwright. The folder entitled Land Concerns contains three items, which discuss land prices, payments made on property and one offer to George to survey land Folder 6, contains the papers of Catherine Sperry which include report cards, a teaching certificate and letters from her brother Ripley. One of the more interesting items is an account of a total eclipse of the sun written in 1806.

BACKGROUND SOURCES LOCATED IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Mf C 1 Plattsburgh Republican, May 15, 1812, p 3, col 4.

Mf C 2 The President, Plattsburgh Republican, Aug. 2, 1817, p 2, cols 3- 4.

Mf C 12 Historical Reminiscences: letter to the editor, Plattsburgh Republican, Feb. 17, 1872, p 3, col 4.

Mf D 10 Alumni Association and Banquet. The Old Academy and the Plattsburgh High School Join Hands, Plattsburgh Sentinel, July 1, 1892. p 1, col 6.

1810-1870 New York state Federal Census, Clinton County, New York.

Hurd, Duane H. History of Clinton and Franklin Counties. (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Company, 1880.)

CONTENTS

Housed in a half Hollinger box and further subdivided by consecutively numbered folders this material is centered around three members of the Sperry family: Gilead, George, and Catherine. The majority of items pertaining to George Sperry are located in folders 2-5. Catherine Sperry's papers are situated in folder 6, while Gilead's papers are in folder 1. This set of papers also contains one oversized item located in folder 12.

Box 1 of 1

Folder ITEMS

- 1 Gilead Sperry's Papers 5
- 2 Correspondence to George Sperry 7
- 3 Official Papers of George Sperry 7
- 4 Business Papers of George Sperry 8
- S Land Concerns of George Sperry 3
- 6 Catherine Sperry's Papers 14
- 7 Unaddressed Letters 2
- 8 Clippings 17
- 9 Genealogical Correspondence 11
- ID An account of a total eclipse (1806) 1
- 11 Miscellaneous 4

Total: 79

- 12 Oversized Material
- Map of Washington, D.C. 1924 1

Total # of items: 80